

ABSTRACT

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THE INFLUENCE OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG ON THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

1923–1930

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This research explores Louis Armstrong's artistic choices and their impact directly and indirectly on the African-American literary, visual and performing arts between 1923 and 1930 during the period known as the Harlem Renaissance. This research uses analyses of musical transcriptions and examples of the period's literary and visual arts to verify the significance of Armstrong's influence(s). This research also analyzes the early nineteenth century West-African musical practices evident in Congo Square that were present in the traditional jazz and cultural behaviors that Armstrong heard and experienced growing up in New Orleans. Additionally, through a discourse analysis approach, this research examines the impact of Armstrong's art on the philosophical debate regarding the purpose of the period's art. Specifically, W.E.B. Du

Bois's desire for the period's art to be used as propaganda and Alain Locke's admonitions that period African-American artists not produce works with the plight of blacks in America as the sole theme.

THE INFLUENCE OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG ON THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE
1923–1930

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BY
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When questioned about the possible relationship or cross influences between Harlem Renaissance writers and musicians, a college professor said any interactions and consequential inspirational art was minimal at best. He surmised that the Harlem Renaissance writers were merely imitating French impressionists, and the canon they produced was sub-par.¹ This research challenges that point of view through discourse analysis as well as musical transcriptions and explores the influence of one of the period's seminal performing artists, Louis Armstrong. His improvisational choices helped ignite a variety of artistic activities during 1923-1930, the period considered here. The reader will note such activity in Figure 1. Contrary to the opinion of the professor, the literary art of Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neal Hurston, among others, were not celebrated in the context of French imitators but were indicative of the creative energy present in Harlem during the third decade of the twentieth century. In separate camps, visual and performing artists too contributed to the period's art.² The genius was in their ability to speak to the soul and essence of the African-American experience.

1. This researcher was enrolled in music as a major course of study at Southern University at New Orleans, and the University of California, Berkeley.

2. David Levering Lewis's *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader* is an excellent resource in this regard.

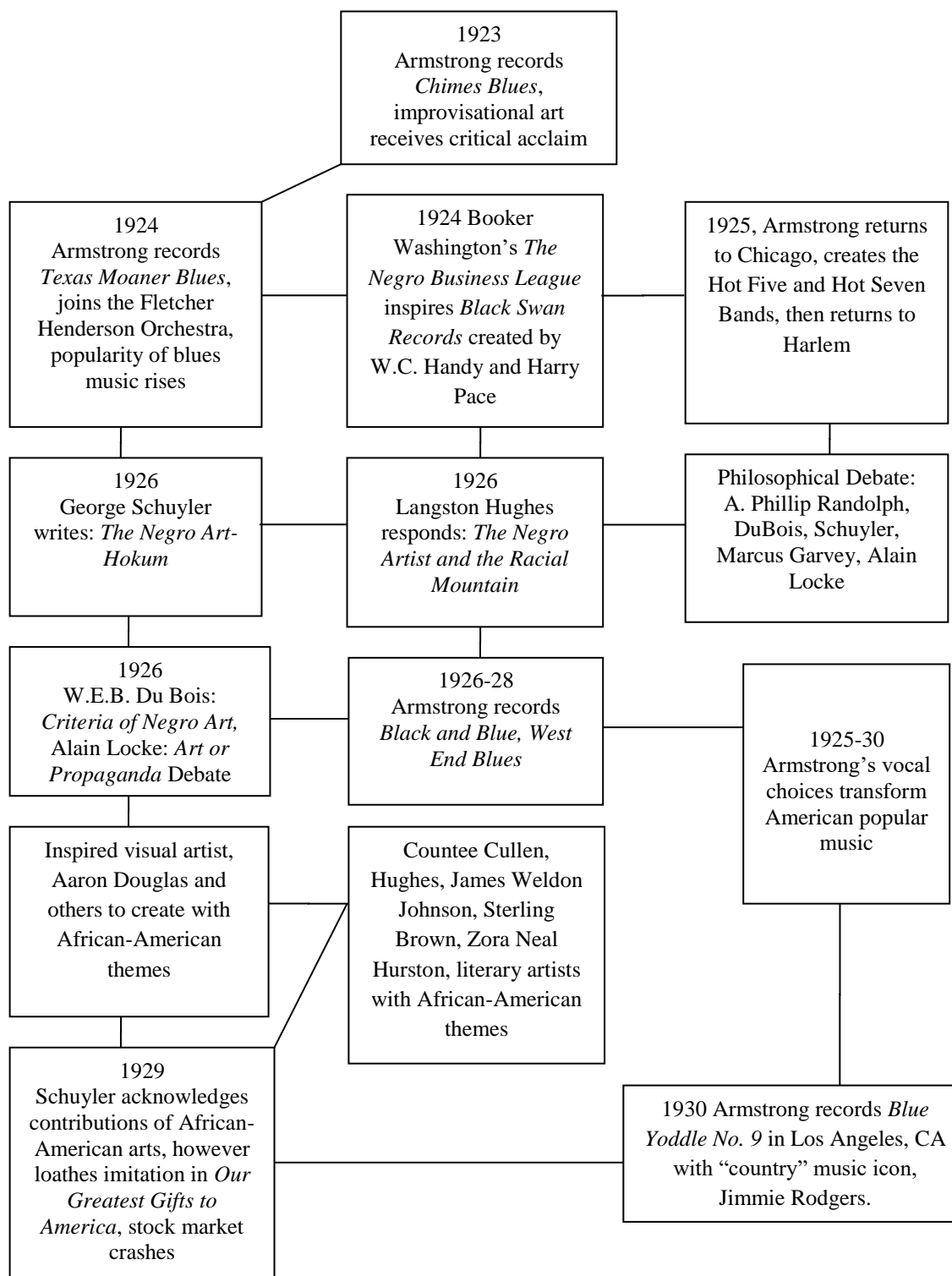


Figure 1. Louis Armstrong's artistic contributions and interrelated artistic, political, and philosophical events, 1923-1930

Armstrong, Du Bois, and the Interactions between the Period's Proponents and Detractors

In addition to the interrelatedness of Louis Armstrong's creative choices and the period's literary and visual arts, this research examines the impact of Armstrong's art and blues music on the political and philosophical debate during the Harlem Renaissance. Indeed, the ascension of the popularity of blues music by 1926 was measurable when placed in the context of sales of recordings. Simultaneously, the discussion of the worth, purpose and existence the period's arts was elevating. Interestingly, Armstrong's growth from his earliest recordings (*Chimes Blues* in 1923 and *Texas Moaner Blues* in 1924) to the period's seminal recordings, *Black and Blue* and *West End Blues* in 1926 and 1928 parallels the rise in blues and jazz music's popularity between 1923 and 1930.³ His contributions are the culmination of childhood and adolescent years in New Orleans, a region that agglutinated the African-American folk music from the interior of Mississippi (the blues), ragtime, and the West African musical practices exhibited by the enslaved in Congo Square. To this end, Armstrong's art and the popularity of blues and jazz music helped to inspire a debate as to the quiddity, purpose, and legitimacy of the *Harlem Renaissance*.

A textual analysis of Du Bois's 1926 speech, "*The Criteria of Negro Art*," shows his awareness of the ascending popularity of the arts in the African-American community. Du Bois believed African-American art should unabashedly embrace all

3. Figure 1 illustrates Armstrong's contributions and some of the seminal events of the period considered here.

aspects of black life, including the Jim Crow south and the oppressive north.⁴ Du Bois also thought that only by shedding light on the inequities in black life, even after the valor shown by African-American soldiers in World War I, will the nation's power structure be alarmed enough to affect change. Contrary to Du Bois's admonitions, cultural theorist Alain Locke believed any art based solely upon racial themes would be boring and prove to the Euro-dominated critical public that the works of African-American artists are sub-par and produced by a group incapable of creating quality work that would meet Euro-centric standards. In 1926 Locke published his theory in an article titled *Art or Propaganda*.⁵ This research also explores the contrary view to the validity of the period's arts that cultural critic George Schuyler expressed in an essay titled *The Negro Art-Hokum*. Schuyler believed that the period's arts were sub-par and lacked any cultural distinction. Later that same year literary artist Langston Hughes responded to Schuyler in an essay titled *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*. A textual analysis of Hughes's article reveals that, contrary to Schuyler, he believed black artists should embrace their blackness and not be afraid to use all the idiosyncrasies that are indicative of African-American life. However, most of the nation's institutions of higher learning did not share Du Bois's or Hughes's sentiments.

Prior to 1923 and after 1930, there has been a persistent sentiment in the curriculum and the western art canon that promulgates the myth that knowledge, civility, and the act of pondering the depth of a creator, are all gifts brought to Africa by northern

4. Du Bois's admonitions are implicit in the text of his 1926 speech to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People titled, *The Criteria of Negro Art*.

5. See Locke's theories regarding black American art and music in his 1926 article, "Art or Propaganda," *Harlem* Vol. I (November 1928): 219, 256.

visitors whose purpose was to endow the continent's inhabitants with such knowledge. Consequently, western art curricula exclude or minimize most accomplishments and contributions of Africans and African-Americans. Cultural theorist Amiri Baraka opines, "But one of the most persistent traits of the Western white man has always been his fanatical and almost instinctive assumption that his systems and ideas about the world are the most desirable, and further, that people who do not aspire to them, or at least think them admirable, are savages or enemies."⁶ Baraka's theory strikes at the heart of the matter regarding the Euro-centric resistance to multi-cultural infusion into curricula.

Baraka's theory is evident in the treatment of the period known as the Harlem Renaissance in most American secondary and post-secondary curricula. A Euro-centric model for education is evident as courses such as Music Appreciation utilize textbooks that give minute attention to the accomplishments African-Americans or the period's performing artists. Conversely, Euro-centric musicologists readily acknowledge the impact of particular performing western artists in historical context.⁷ Specifically, they do not hesitate to credit or attach particular performing arts genre to a relative (corresponding date of existence or style) movement or cultural period. For example, post-secondary schools teach the contributions of western art in such a manner. Western art music historians designate historical periods, Baroque, Classical, and Romantic, and Modern eras as musical periods. The visual and literary arts created during those prescribed timelines are readily juxtaposed with the relative music. To this end, the

6. Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Harper Collins Books, 1963), 29.

7. Donald Jay Grout's, *A History of Western Music* (New York: Norton, 1960) is a widely used textbook in American music programs.

failure to acknowledge non-western contributions to western art served to normalize the marginalization of the importance of the Harlem Renaissance. The period's performing artists, particularly Louis Armstrong did not escape the lack of recognition evident even in publications that extolled the virtues of the period. In the foreword to Nathan Irvin Huggins's publication, *Harlem Renaissance*, Arnold Rampersad writes, "One of the lesser strengths of this book—one can lodge this complaint about every book in existence about the Harlem Renaissance—is the treatment of music, although what Huggins writes about blues and jazz is certainly more than adequate as a contribution to the mainstream of his arguments."⁸ Rampersad's thoughts reveal the all too often practice of separating or minimizing the importance of the performing arts to the period considered here.

Early West African Cultural Influences in New Orleans and Subsequently on Louis Armstrong's and the Period's Arts

The creation of jazz and blues music, as well as the advent of the period known as the Harlem Renaissance, did not evolve in a cultural vacuum. Cultural practices and behaviors were taught, recalled, embraced, and enhanced through the arts. To this end, this research explores aspects of African history and the evidence that it influenced the cultural behaviors and music of the New Orleans enslaved population. This research examines accounts of their performing arts practices within the city proper in an area called Congo Square. Such documented behaviors and resulting rituals cultivated a cultural uniqueness that directly influenced the early jazz pioneers and subsequently

8. Arnold Rampersad, Forward to *Harlem Renaissance*, Nathan Irvin Huggins (New York: Oxford University Press 2007), xxx.

Louis Armstrong.⁹ Specifically, historians, such as Cheikh Ante Diop, Al Bakri, and Ivan Van Sertima, researched the cultural and political atmosphere in West Africa particularly the Mali, Songhay and Ghanaian empires from the tenth to nineteenth centuries.¹⁰ Diop especially noted the pre, and post-Islamic influences on West African culture particularly music which had a significant bearing on the music heard in Congo Square. To this end, Carter G. Woodson's landmark publication, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* serves as an invaluable resource. The absence of relevancy of African and African-American contributions to American and world culture and history was outlined by Woodson in his seminal publication.¹¹

The earliest enslaved Africans brought to Louisiana in 1719 were Senegambians.¹² Significantly, they were descendants of an ethnic group whose contributions to African history and culture extended geographically from the Atlantic Ocean east to the Nile River. The Senegambians were both contributors and benefactors of a geographic region that flourished for centuries fermenting an exchange of goods, and philosophies. According to New Orleans historian Ned Sublette, "One would suppose that the music of the Africans in Louisiana during the French period bore a strong

9. Congo Square is an area in New Orleans where the enslaved Africans gathered weekly on Sundays. Witnesses documented the West African cultural behaviors, particularly the music-making proclivities.

10. See Diop's publication, *Pre-Colonial Black Africa* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987); Al Bakri, "The Book of Routes and Realms," in *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West Africa* (New York: Marcus Weiner Press, 1981), 62–87; Ivan Van Sertima's *They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in the America* (New York: Random House, 1976), 110-24.

11. Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1933), 88-9.

12. Ned Sublette, *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009), 60.

resemblance to the music of the Senegambians, the home-land of the majority of its people.”¹³ The significance here is that the very individuals who were forcibly located to this area brought with them from the region mentioned earlier, a degree of the humanities (performing and visual arts) which was part of their homeland experience. Subsequently, much of American jazz music has its roots in New Orleans, particularly Congo Square which was one of the few places where the enslaved Africans practiced cultural behaviors including music and dance without limits placed upon them by their captors.

Arguably, no other area in the United States had a more concentrated diverse population than New Orleans. Researcher Rick Coleman offers this opinion: “With a true melting pot of French, African, Native American, German, Spanish, and Caribbean inhabitants, New Orleans became the heart that pumped a very different cultural message upstream against the overwhelming white-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant current in America.”¹⁴ The city’s geographical position made it a center for the slave trade as colonial powers Spain and France alternately controlled the region. In addition to French and Spanish settlers, the city’s population consisted of enslaved Africans (descendants of Senegambians) as well as other groups from West Africa whose Middle Passage Experience included the Caribbean Islands. The city’s residents also included free men and women of African descent, immigrants from Germany, Italy and the region’s aboriginal population, the Choctaw nation. Ironically, during the War of 1812, General Jackson’s army included enslaved Africans, free men of color, French, German, Spanish

13. Ibid., 60.

14. Rick Coleman, *Blue Monday: Fats Domino and the Lost Dawn of Rock N’ Roll* (New York: Da Capo Press. 2006), 1.

settlers as well as Native Americans, all indicative of the city's population during the formative years of jazz and blues music.¹⁵

The sources of Armstrong's art and much of the region's mores are cultural recollections of West African musical practices. The region has a history of enslavement that included (though not exclusively) cultural interactions between the aforementioned Senegambians and their descendants, captives who arrived after being brought to the Caribbean Islands, European –Americans (including non-slave holders) and free people of color. The resulting folkways include musical practices that are reflected in early jazz and the improvisational art of Louis Armstrong. Specifically, the enslaved often gathered in Congo Square where they displayed cultural behaviors reminiscent of those in West Africa. A discourse analysis from the perspective of observers shows similarities such as the use of encircled drums in ritual fashion as well as an apparent use of timbre in the context of poly-rhythms. Latrobe¹⁶ and British explorer Mongo Park¹⁷ on separate occasions noted not only the hospitality they experienced as visitors but the intricacies and interactions between the musicians, dancers and pertinent stakeholders. Significantly, there is a direct connection or lineage to Armstrong's artistic choices during the Harlem Renaissance and the folkways of the enslaved in Congo Square. Their musical approach, particularly the practice of harnessing timbres such that the polyrhythmic uses, forces musicians to create rhythms and sounds that are contrary to others yet conform musically,

15. See Henry Kmen's *Music in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), vii, viii.

16. Benjamin Latrobe, *The Journal of Latrobe: Being the Notes and Sketches of an Architect, Naturalist and Traveler in the United States from 1796 to 1820* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1971), 175-81.

17. Mongo Park, *The Journal of a Mission to the Interior of Africa in the Year 1805* (London: John Murray, 1815), 200-202; 275-76; 319-21.

was seminal to Armstrong's choices. Indeed early jazz and blues music blossomed from the necessity of establishing roles in the performing arts context. Thus began the development of musical roles to ensure the success of any particular performance. Consequently, two decades after the Civil War, the descendants of the Congo Square musicians began playing European wind instruments including trumpets, clarinets, and trombone, (integral to the New Orleans polyphony) with the same musical sensibilities. Second generation blues and jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, and "Jelly Roll" Morton carried out those sensibilities throughout the Harlem Renaissance and beyond. The weekly cultural gatherings of the enslaved described earlier by Benjamin Latrobe gave rise to musical practices that were precursors to the creation of early jazz music.¹⁸ Intricate rhythm patterns present in their West African homeland were performed on makeshift drums as the enslaved danced, sang, and collectively recalled the mores and folkways of their ancestral home, West Africa. Amiri Baraka suggests that West Africans had particular musical sensibilities regarding rhythm:

The reason for the remarkable development of the rhythmic qualities of African music can certainly be traced to the fact that Africans also used the drums for communication; and not, as once thought, merely in a kind of primitive Morse code, but by the phonetic reproduction of the words themselves—the result being that Africans developed an extremely complex rhythmic sense, as well as becoming unusually responsive to timbral subtleties.¹⁹

According to Latrobe several enslaved Africans were playing makeshift percussion instruments while others were dancing:

18. See Sidney Bechet's description of his enslaved grandfather (a musician at Congo Square) in his autobiography *Treat It Gentle* (Cambridge: DaCapo Press, 1958), 45-61.

19. *Ibid.*, 26.

They were formed into circular groups, in the midst of four of which that I examined (but there were more of them) was a ring, the largest not ten feet in diameter. In the first were two women dancing. They held each a coarse handkerchief, extended by the corners in their hands, and set to each other in a miserably dull and slow figure, hardly moving their feet or bodies. The music consisted of two drums and a stringed instrument. An old man set astride of a cylindrical drum, about a foot in diameter, and beat it with incredible quickness with the edge of his hands and fingers. The other drum was an opened staved thing held between the knees and beaten the same way.²⁰

Latrobe then makes references to Africa, “The most curious instrument, however no doubt was a stringed instrument, which was imported from Africa.”²¹ Latrobe notes an elderly gentleman singing, “A man sung an uncouth song to the dancing, and the women screamed a detestable burden on one single note. The allowed amusements of Sunday have, it seems, perpetuated here those of Africa among its former inhabitants...”²²

Latrobe’s last point reveals the difficulty in assigning western-art music criticism to non-western music. Theoretically, the creation of blues and jazz music was not supervening to cultural behaviors in Congo Square. The descendants of the enslaved performing artists in Congo Square use the same approach to making music decades later when experiencing life in under the *Black Codes* (specific laws created to restrict the constitutional freedoms gained by the former enslaved), they gained access to European instruments. This researcher believes that the late nineteenth century blues and jazz music pioneers were exhibiting cultural recollections of their enslaved fore parents.

Among the similarities between West African and African American music discovered by composer and musicologist Olly Wilson were such practices as percussive

20. Benjamin Latrobe, *Journal of Latrobe* (New York: D. Appleton, 1905), 179-81.

21. *Ibid.*, 180.

22. *Ibid.*

body usage, communal approach to music making, call-response, the creation of a heterogeneous sound ideal, and poly or stratified rhythms. Wilson researched the music and cultural behaviors in Ghana and published his findings. His theories are of significant importance when they are placed in the context of the practice of call and response in a solo performing art setting. According to Wilson, “This partially is a result of the stratification commonly found in the instrumental music of the culture area we are considering, but it is also present in solo songs—where the singer seems to furnish his own counter voice.”²³ Interestingly, Latrobe’s description included all of the musical practices described by Wilson. When the musicians performed in Congo Square, they played percussion instruments that had various timbres. Subsequently, each instrument had a particular role depending on the song. Indeed the cultural act of communal music making in which non-musicians or spectators are expected to join in still exists today not only in the New Orleans region but also in African-American and American popular musical traditions. Not unlike the music of the enslaved in other sections, the music produced in Congo Square served other functions. It often provided a melancholy relief to the performing artists and stakeholders as well as welcomed recollections of their ancestral homeland.

The years following the Civil War and Reconstruction gave rise to the imposition of the *Black Codes* that sought to re-impose antebellum cultural, political, and educational restrictions despite there being the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth

23. Olly Wilson, “The Significance of the Relationship between Afro-American Music and West African Music,” *Black Perspectives in Music* 2, no.1 (Spring 1974): 16.

amendments.²⁴ More significantly, the reaction of the second and third generations of New Orleans musicians was to continue the cultural behaviors and musical practices of their enslaved fore parents. Simultaneously, there was an influx of groups of formerly enslaved who migrated to New Orleans from the interior of Mississippi and who in turn introduced a type of music born out of spirituals, field hollers, and work songs. The new performing art was called the “blues.” Subsequently, circa 1890, early New Orleans African-American musicians such as Buddy Bolden, John Robicheaux, and Sidney Bechet played a hybrid of ragtime, blues, and spirituals with the music passed down from Congo Square. Interestingly, they played this new genre in performing arts ensembles using various European wind and percussion instruments that had been prevalent in the region’s western music tradition most of the nineteenth century. Researcher Samuel Floyd Jr. argues,

The banjo, flute triangle, drum, quills, and sticks (bones) were ubiquitous in slave culture. It is not surprising to find that this combination of instruments is perfectly suited to the realization of the heterogeneous sound ideal. The combination of these sounds creates a contrasting, not a blending, conglomerate, resulting in a sound that is ideally suited to the rhythmic, polyphonic, and tonal stratifications of African and African-American music.²⁵

More importantly, the performing artists’ creative instincts inspired them to utilize the same musical approach practiced earlier in Congo Square.²⁶ Such was the music tradition Louis Armstrong learned as a child and executed as an adolescent in New

24. Historically, the reactionary violent behavior to end Reconstruction in Louisiana came in 1880 at the battle of Canal Street when terrorist groups murdered hundreds of blacks and forced many out of the city. Coincidentally, Louisiana’s first black governor, P.B.S. Pinchback is the grandfather of Harlem Renaissance writer Jean Toomer.

25. Samuel Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 56.

26. See Henry Kmen’s *Music in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1966), 226-45.

Orleans. The musical and genealogical lineage are confirmed when one identifies that an enslaved man named Omar, the maternal grandfather of early jazz pioneer Sidney Bechet, was a practicing musician in Congo Square. Bechet discussed Omar's saga, including the desperate attempt of Omar to maintain a love affair with another slave who carried his child and was under the control of another area slaveholder. Bechet proudly reflected on his grandfather and his African heritage in his autobiography: "It's all true, all that was said about my grandfather. And it's all so mixed up with the music. In Paris it's like I can hear all that was happening to it when my grandfather was making (music) it, back in those days when it had just been brought from Africa and was still finding itself in the South."²⁷ Bechet also explains the poignant reason for his adopted country: "I knew why, France it's closer to Africa. I've wanted to be as close to it as I could. It's the mood, you'd call it, an atmosphere I wanted to put myself into. My grandfather, he was Africa."²⁸

The manifestation of a "communal" approach to making music identified by Olly Wilson is present in many of the region's customs, mores, and behaviors, particularly in the African-American community.²⁹ Succinctly, West African and African-American musicians not only want but also expect their music to be affirmed by non-musicians joining in, either by singing along, dancing or by finding and using parts of their bodies or an inanimate objects percussively. Jazz historians Donald D. Megill and Richard S. Demory agree: "Everyone within earshot was expected to participate. There were few

27. Ibid., 79.

28. Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 79.

29. Ibid., 15.

passive observers. A typical performance would have a leader, accompanied by drummers and possible other instrumentalists, who called out rhythmic words or phrases. The participating ‘audience,’ clapping in time and moving in unison, would shout a response.”³⁰ The authors surmised further: “African music making thus was a collective experience in which everyone had the opportunity for self-transcendence through music.”³¹ The venues for early jazz musicians and frequented by a young Armstrong included bars, dance hall brothels and particularly two areas adjacent to each other, Johnson and Lincoln Parks as well as those associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Customarily, bands would play in an attempt to attract an audience for an upcoming event or the initiation of an affair. In some cases, they would perform an impromptu parade or at a busy neighborhood intersection. In every instance, a communal approach to music making (in which the audience is encouraged to join in) is expected, consequently giving the musicians a sense of validation. Indeed bands and musicians use this practice to determine their worth and success.

Armstrong’s sense of competitiveness, juxtaposed with a keen awareness of his audience’s satisfaction was born out of his experiences observing the custom of musical battles. The cultural behavior was an integral part of the region’s folkways. An example of this was when jazz and blues music pioneers Charles “Buddy” Bolden and John Robicheaux were in simultaneous competition for a single audience. Author Donald Marquis researched the phenomenon and interviewed former resident Louis Jones who

30. Donald McGill and Richard S. Demory, *Introduction to Jazz History* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1984), 2.

31. *Ibid.*, 2.

recalled the weekly festive atmosphere in the following words: “Johnson Park was right next to Lincoln Park. That’s where Bolden used to say to Cornish (musician) and them, say, ‘Cornish, come on put your hands through the window. Put your trombone out there. I’m going to call my children home.’”³² Marquis elaborates,

He would be at Johnson Park; Robicheaux would be at Lincoln Park. Buddy Bolden would start to play and all the people out of Lincoln Park would come on over where Buddy was. Jones did not remember any particular tune that Bolden used, but many others have verified the story of Buddy pointing his horn toward Lincoln Park and powerfully ‘calling’ the Lincoln crowd. And dancers frequently abandoned the smoother Robicheaux band to hear Bolden produced a newer, more raggedy, more exciting sound that stirred their dancing fancy.³³

Bolden and Robicheaux had the same goals: attracting the dancers and expecting their participation, which in turn validated their music and musicianship. Like their fore-parents in Congo Square, these early jazz musicians used poly-rhythms, call-response, percussive body sounds and communal approach to making music.³⁴

The rituals associated with funerals in New Orleans also have vestiges of West African performing arts and cultural behaviors. In such a practice, mourners commonly display melancholy behavior before the deceased is buried. The corresponding ceremony does not necessarily take place in a church but sometimes in someone’s home or funeral parlor. In some cases, such organizations as social and pleasure clubs, which initially were mutual aid societies, stepped in to assist with the financial burden inherited by the family of the deceased. When the deceased is laid to rest, mourners celebrate their

32. Donald Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 62.

33. *Ibid.*, 62.

34. Louis Armstrong witnessed many of the musical battles between New Orleans musicians. See his autobiography, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1954), 136-49.

memory by dancing in the streets while in route to the departed's home or some pre-arranged place to console the bereaved family. A traditional brass band leads the dancers (moaners) through the neighborhood. Armstrong commented on the uniqueness of the event: "The funerals in New Orleans are sad until the body is finally lowered into the grave and the reverend says 'ashes to ashes and dust to dust.' After the brother was six feet under ground [sic] the band would strike up one of those good old tunes like *Didn't He Ramble*, and all the people would leave their worries behind."³⁵ Armstrong's recollections here as a participant inside the culture affirm the dual purpose of the music. Its function's as a conduit for the rituals associated with burials in the region as well as a tool for melancholy relief.

Several West African communities including the Ewe and Ibos have a similar belief system regarding funeral ceremonies. Their concept and customs with regards to funeral rituals are such that it is a celebration of the deceased life. Ethnomusicologist David Locke notes, "A funeral is an affirmation of life, a cause for celebration because another ancestor can now watch over the living. Because spirits of ancestors love music and dance, funeral memorial services feature drumming, singing, and dancing."³⁶ Just as their African-American counterparts, these West African communities give gifts of food to the family to demonstrate their sympathy and their willingness to help with the expected arrival of mourners. This cultural behavior mirrors the practices that transpired decades earlier in Congo Square. Non-musicians are expected to dance, sing, and use

35. Ibid., 91.

36. David Locke, et. al., *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2009), 76.

percussive body sounds, thus becoming a communal music making event. Samuel Floyd Jr. expresses his theory regarding the West African cultural behavior and its practices in New Orleans as follows: “The activities that took place, and still do, in the Akan dancing ring---as they did in those other African societies---have implications for the origin of the ‘second line’ of New Orleans jazz funerals, for the origin and nature scat singing in early and later jazz, and for the nature of ‘shouting’ in African-American ring ritual and its derivatives.”³⁷ Floyd Jr.’s discussion reinforces this researcher’s theory as to the origins of Armstrong’s and the period’s arts. They are West African in origin.

The Precursors to “Texas Moaner Blues:” The Impact of the Debate Regarding Black Education on Armstrong’s Early Years and Coming of Age, and the Post World War I Atmosphere in America

There existed a robust debate regarding which training, (industrial or liberal arts education) would be best suited for the training of the descendants of the former enslaved prior to and after the period considered here. The industrial or Hampton-Tuskegee industrial arts model was in many institutions including the Albany Bible and Manual Training Institute. Indeed the industrial model training was more in full fruition by the time Armstrong received his initial formal education at the Colored Boys Waif’s Home. Some, such as Booker T. Washington and Joseph W. Holley believed industrial training was the best path forward. Washington’s staunchest critic may have been W.E.B. Du Bois. In 1910 Du Bois discussed the importance and need of arts education such as the one Armstrong was receiving. According to Du Bois, “Training for life teaches living;

37. Samuel Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 22.

but what training for the profitable living together of black men and white?”³⁸ Wells also opposes Booker T. Washington’s stance on social issues and education: “Our policy was to denounce the wrongs and injustices which were heaped upon our people, and to use whatever influences we had to help right the m.”³⁹ Wells expounds,

Mr. Washington’s theory had been that we ought not to spend our time agitating for our rights; that we had better give attention to trying to be first class people in a jim [sic] crow car than insisting that the jim crow car be abolished; that we should spend more time practicing industrial pursuits and getting education to fit us for this work than in going to college and striving for a college education.⁴⁰

Carter G. Woodson contributes a perspective cautioning against Euro-centric curricula at the expense of self-knowledge: “The education of any people should begin with the people themselves, but Negroes thus trained have been dreaming about ancients of Europe and about those who have tried to imitate them.”⁴¹ The debate over an “industrial” or “liberal arts” education (particularly during the decades preceding the Harlem Renaissance) for African Americans demonstrates more than anything the differences in the philosophies of Dubois and Booker T. Washington. The two educators discussed what Anderson outlined in detail, the dependency of teacher training on “normal schools” which were established primarily by missionaries from the north to teach basic reading and writing. Anderson noted that the early twentieth century leaders pointed out that poorly educated and then under-trained teachers caused a schism in

38. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2003), 69.

39. Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 265.

40. *Ibid.*, 265.

41. Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1933), 21.

African American education, particularly in the south, that took decades to correct, and was responsible for the absence of confidence in Historically Black Colleges that remains today.⁴² The opposing philosophies polarized activists, philosophers, and artists. Du Bois spent a number of weeks in southwest Georgia on a fact-finding mission as a part of Atlanta University's efforts to study the social conditions of African-Americans in various parts of the United States. He concluded that conditions were economically deplorable and vestiges of an economy that was based on cotton were devastating to poor whites and crippling to the former and descendants of the enslaved. Du Bois notes the importance of the arts in education:

In the direction of art and literature much can be done which has not been done for Negroes. It is difficult for the people of America to understand that the Negro is essentially an artistic being, whose rich emotional nature can be made to contribute much to the world's enjoyment and appreciation of beauty. To this end greater opportunity in drawing and music and other art-training should be opened to Negro children.⁴³

Seven years earlier, Du Bois succinctly expressed his views on industrial education and posed this question: "...if after all the industrial school is the final and sufficient answer in the training of the Negro race; and to ask gently, but in all sincerity, the ever-recurring query of the ages, Is not life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?"⁴⁴

Interestingly, Holley was inspired by Du Bois to build a school in Albany, GA. The area was a focal point of Du Bois's sociological research in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

42. James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 18-32.

43. W.E.B. Du Bois, *Efforts for Social Betterment among Negro Americans* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1909), 133.

44. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Barnes and Nobel Classics, 2003), 71.

However, by choice, the school mirrored Washington's Tuskegee Institute. The pioneer educator explained his decision:

Just at this time, there fell into my hands *The Souls of Black Folk*, a book written by W.E.B. Du Bois, a brilliant young professor at Atlanta University. In this famous book, concerning which an English critic had said, 'It is the most outstanding piece of literature ever produced in the south,' there were two chapters on Dougherty County, Georgia. After reading these two chapters on Dougherty County and picturing in my mind the vast ignorance which festered untouched there, I closed Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, got down on my knees and prayed: 'Lord give me the courage to go to Dougherty County and strike a blow at the ignorance portrayed by Mr. Du Bois.'⁴⁵

Philanthropic support overwhelmingly went to schools with an industrial arts curriculum.

Lewis details,

Thus, the endowments vocational Hampton and Tuskegee institutes ballooned until they were among the richest schools in the country with an (by 1925, Hampton ranked seventeenth in the country with an endowment of 8.5 million), the three outstanding Afro-American liberal arts colleges---Atlanta, Fisk, and Lincoln---were reduced to pittance by the Carnegie, Jeans, Phelps-Stokes, and Slater foundations, and the General Education Board.⁴⁶

In New Orleans, an industrial education curriculum coupled with a fine arts component was at the center of the teaching philosophy at The Colored Waifs' Boys Home. Armstrong was criminally sentenced to the youth detention center by a juvenile court judge after illegally discharging a firearm. The future cultural icon received his first formal music training there. Significantly, the institution's band was an integral part of the city's culture as they participated in parades, funerals, and civic events. Of significant note here is that the education of the city's wayward black youth was placed in the hands of an African-American war veteran, specifically, a veteran of the Spanish-American

45. Joseph W. Holley, *You Can't Build a Chimney from the Top* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1948), 30.

46. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 158.

War. Captain Joseph Jones was named the school's headmaster. An impressionable young Armstrong came under the influence of the military disciplinarian that also spoke Spanish and served as a translator for President William McKinley. Coincidentally, President McKinley was familiar with the Waifs' Home model of industrial education having met with Booker T. Washington and praising his work after visiting Tuskegee Institute in 1898. McKinley was particularly appreciative of Washington's acknowledgement of his (McKinley's) recognition of African-American soldiers.⁴⁷

Louis Armstrong's improvisational art was the product of a direct correlation between the curricula, teaching styles, and Jones's mentorship. The headmaster inspired a reverence for the flag and country. According to Armstrong, "The keepers were all colored. Mr. Jones, a young man who had recently served in the cavalry, drilled us every morning in the court in front of the Waifs' Home and we were taught the manual of arms with wooden guns."⁴⁸ Jones' presence in Armstrong's life proved essential to his existential growth as a citizen and musician. Jones's life and contributions to the education of disadvantaged youth in New Orleans was indicative of cultural critic and period naysayer George Schuyler's argument that patriotism, discipline, and artistic conformity are the virtues necessary for African-American social advancement. Additionally, Schuyler thought "Negro" art was non-existent. However, Jones not only encouraged visual and performing arts as integral parts of the curriculum but at his behest, the reformatory had a jazz band. Indeed Jones embraced a performing art that was inherently African-American before Hughes suggested it approximately twenty-six years

47. Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Signet Classic. 2000), 179.

48. Armstrong, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans*, 38.

later. Armstrong alluded to Jones' importance to his development beyond music on several occasions, particularly when his career was ascending during the 1930s.⁴⁹

Therefore, it is important to explore the source of Jones' patriotisms, civility, and most importantly a sense of duty where the underserved children of New Orleans were concerned. Specifically, as it relates to the desire to be considered as contributors to American culture, particularly in the arts. The headmaster's patriotism was evident even during his retirement as the nation prepared for entry into World War I.

Captain Jones sought, much to the chagrin of his wife, to join the new black officer training corps arranged by the War Department through the efforts of W.E.B. Du Bois and others. Specifically, during the period leading to America's decision to participate in World War I (which was coincidentally the years just before the Harlem Renaissance) Du Bois advocated for black participation.⁵⁰ Du Bois believed that black involvement in the war effort was a means of proving patriotism and advancing the push for constitutionally guaranteed freedoms. He successfully pushed for the creation of the nations' first black officer training corps. The opportunity to demonstrate patriotism reverberated throughout the African-American community. The patriotic mood was also present in Joseph W. Holley and the campus of the Albany Bible and Manual Training Institute in Albany, Georgia, as all male students, faculty, and staff including the school's

49. See George W. Kay's Forward to "Louis Armstrong's Letter to His Daddy," *The Second Line* Hogan Jazz Archives, 1976, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA, 12-15.

50. See David Levering Lewis' discussion of Du Bois' quest for a black officer training school in *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 555-567.

president, volunteered for military service.⁵¹ Jones, Du Bois, and Holley believed military service would be an affirmation of their patriotism, proving them worthy of constitutional guarantees. Unfortunately, at war's end, and at the dawn of the period considered here, Du Bois, the veterans, their families, and the black community did not see a stop to the Jim Crow policies and cultural biases. Du Bois responded by writing a blurb in the *Crisis* magazine titled *Returning Soldiers*. Du Bois surmises, "For the America that represents and gloats in lynching, disenfranchisement, caste, brutality and devilish insult---for this, in the hateful, upturning and mixing of things, we were forced by vindictive fate to fight, also."⁵² Du Bois's opine captures the disappointment and outrage African-American war veterans faced after despite fighting and risking their lives for European freedoms on behalf of America they were still denied constitutional guaranteed liberties.

One of the many projects Du Bois and other members of the NAACP had on their agenda at the Paris Peace Conference was the gathering and dissemination of the history of the African-American in the War. Obviously, Du Bois was cognizant of the struggles most of those same soldiers were undergoing upon their return to the United States. In *Returning Soldiers*, he captures the sentiment of those who refuse to accept status quo with regards to race relations in America, particularly after fighting a war to guarantee human rights in Europe. Indeed, post-war events inspired much of the revolutionary themes in the period's art. Their demand for freedom after risking their lives to liberate

51. See Holley's discussion regarding the male faculty and students volunteering for WWI in *You Can't Build a Chimney from the Top*, 31-2.

52. W.E. B. Du Bois, "Returning Soldiers," *Crisis Magazine* 18, no. 1 (May, 1919): 14.

others was expressed across the country but met with violent repercussions. The impact upon the period's literary arts is measurable.

The years following the war were fraught with racial tension. Efforts to get Congress to pass an anti-lynching bill failed and the terrorist acts were increasingly met with resistance (evident in the riots during the summer of 1919) as the *New Negro* sentiment expressed in *Returning Soldiers* and Claude McKay's *If We Must Die*.⁵³ Simultaneously, Armstrong's years as an apprentice turned into opportunities to grow as an artist. He grew artistically from a side man in some of New Orleans top bands to a leader replacing his idol Joe "King" Oliver. The latter relocated to Chicago as did many African-Americans during this wave of migration. His stint on the Mississippi River boat Sydney allowed for growth as a reading musician. However, Armstrong's eventual move to Chicago at the behest of Oliver to join the latter's band proved to be prophetic, as the young blues and jazz artist attained wide-range recognition for his improvisational skills.⁵⁴

Armstrong's Improvisational Art Gains Notoriety

In 1924 Armstrong joined Charlie Irvis and fellow New Orleanians Sidney Bechet and Clarence Williams to record *Texas Moaner Blues* (see Figure 2). Traditionally, the wind instruments in this aggregation consist of a clarinet (Bechet), trumpet (Armstrong), and trombone (Irvis). The significance here is that the melody prevails while improvisational freedom is not only sought but also expected.

53. See Claude McKay's epic poem, "If We Must Die," *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Penguin Books 1994), 289.

54. See Armstrong's discussion of his decision in his memoir, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans*, 211-28.

Texas Moaner Blues

F. Barnes and C. Williams

Transcribed By: Michael Decuir

Trumpet in B \flat

Clarinet in B \flat

Trombone

B \flat Tpt.

B \flat Cl.

Tbn.

3

8va

4

3

3

7

3

3

7

3

(continued)

Texas Moaner Blues

The musical score is for a piece titled "Texas Moaner Blues". It consists of three systems of staves for Bb Tpt., Bb Cl., and Tbn. The first system covers measures 10 to 12. The second system covers measures 13 to 15. The third system covers measures 16 to 18. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, eighth rests, and triplet markings. The Tbn. part features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 12 and another triplet in measure 18. The Bb Cl. part has an 8va marking in measure 15. The Bb Tpt. part has an 8va marking in measure 17. The Tbn. part has an 8va marking in measure 16. The Bb Cl. part has an 8va marking in measure 17. The Bb Tpt. part has an 8va marking in measure 18.

Measures 10-12:

- B \flat Tpt. starts at measure 10, playing eighth notes and quarter notes.
- B \flat Cl. starts at measure 10, playing eighth notes and quarter notes.
- Tbn. starts at measure 10, playing eighth notes and quarter notes.

Measures 13-15:

- B \flat Tpt. continues with eighth notes and quarter notes.
- B \flat Cl. has an 8va marking in measure 15.
- Tbn. continues with eighth notes and quarter notes.

Measures 16-18:

- B \flat Tpt. continues with eighth notes and quarter notes.
- B \flat Cl. has an 8va marking in measure 17.
- Tbn. continues with eighth notes and quarter notes, including a triplet in measure 18.

(continued)

Texas Moaner Blues

System 1 (Measures 19-21):

- B \flat Tpt.**: Measure 19 starts with a whole rest, followed by a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. Measure 20 has a whole rest. Measure 21 has a quarter note F, a quarter note E, and a quarter note D. A "Break!" instruction is above measure 20. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it in measure 21.
- B \flat Cl.**: Measure 19 has a whole rest. Measure 20 has a whole rest. Measure 21 has a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. An 8va line is indicated above measure 20. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it in measure 21.
- Tbn.**: Measure 19 has a whole rest. Measure 20 has a whole rest. Measure 21 has a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it in measure 21.

System 2 (Measures 22-24):

- B \flat Tpt.**: Measure 22 has a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it. Measure 23 has a quarter note F, a quarter note E, and a quarter note D. Measure 24 has a quarter note C, a quarter note B, and a quarter note A.
- B \flat Cl.**: Measure 22 has a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it. Measure 23 has a quarter note F, a quarter note E, and a quarter note D. Measure 24 has a quarter note C, a quarter note B, and a quarter note A.
- Tbn.**: Measure 22 has a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it. Measure 23 has a quarter note F, a quarter note E, and a quarter note D. Measure 24 has a quarter note C, a quarter note B, and a quarter note A. An 8va line is indicated above measure 23.

System 3 (Measures 25-27):

- B \flat Tpt.**: Measure 25 has a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it. Measure 26 has a quarter note F, a quarter note E, and a quarter note D. Measure 27 has a quarter note C, a quarter note B, and a quarter note A. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it in measure 27.
- B \flat Cl.**: Measure 25 has a whole rest. Measure 26 has a whole rest. Measure 27 has a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it in measure 27.
- Tbn.**: Measure 25 has a quarter note Bb, a quarter note A, and a quarter note G. A triplet of eighth notes (Bb, A, G) is marked with a "3" above it. Measure 26 has a quarter note F, a quarter note E, and a quarter note D. Measure 27 has a quarter note C, a quarter note B, and a quarter note A.

(continued)

4

Texas Moaner Blues

The musical score for "Texas Moaner Blues" is presented in three systems, each containing three staves for Bb Tpt., Bb Cl., and Tbn. The key signature is Bb major (two flats), and the time signature is 4/4.

System 1 (Measures 28-30):

- Bb Tpt. (Measure 28):** Starts with a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes G4, F#4, E4, D4, and a quarter rest. Measure 29: Quarter note D4, eighth notes C4, B3, A3, G3, and a quarter rest. Measure 30: Quarter note G3, eighth notes F#3, E3, D3, and a quarter rest.
- Bb Cl. (Measure 28):** Quarter note G4, eighth notes F#4, E4, D4, and a quarter rest. Measure 29: Quarter note D4, eighth notes C4, B3, A3, G3, and a quarter rest. Measure 30: Quarter note G3, eighth notes F#3, E3, D3, and a quarter rest.
- Tbn. (Measure 28):** Quarter note G4, eighth notes F#4, E4, D4, and a quarter rest. Measure 29: Quarter note D4, eighth notes C4, B3, A3, G3, and a quarter rest. Measure 30: Quarter note G3, eighth notes F#3, E3, D3, and a quarter rest.

System 2 (Measures 31-33):

- Bb Tpt. (Measure 31):** Quarter note G4, eighth notes F#4, E4, D4, and a quarter rest. Measure 32: Quarter note D4, eighth notes C4, B3, A3, G3, and a quarter rest. Measure 33: Quarter note G3, eighth notes F#3, E3, D3, and a quarter rest.
- Bb Cl. (Measure 31):** Quarter note G4, eighth notes F#4, E4, D4, and a quarter rest. Measure 32: Quarter note D4, eighth notes C4, B3, A3, G3, and a quarter rest. Measure 33: Quarter note G3, eighth notes F#3, E3, D3, and a quarter rest.
- Tbn. (Measure 31):** Quarter note G4, eighth notes F#4, E4, D4, and a quarter rest. Measure 32: Quarter note D4, eighth notes C4, B3, A3, G3, and a quarter rest. Measure 33: Quarter note G3, eighth notes F#3, E3, D3, and a quarter rest.

System 3 (Measures 34-36):

- Bb Tpt. (Measure 34):** Quarter note G4, eighth notes F#4, E4, D4, and a quarter rest. Measure 35: Quarter note D4, eighth notes C4, B3, A3, G3, and a quarter rest. Measure 36: Quarter note G3, eighth notes F#3, E3, D3, and a quarter rest.
- Bb Cl. (Measure 34):** Quarter note G4, eighth notes F#4, E4, D4, and a quarter rest. Measure 35: Quarter note D4, eighth notes C4, B3, A3, G3, and a quarter rest. Measure 36: Quarter note G3, eighth notes F#3, E3, D3, and a quarter rest.
- Tbn. (Measure 34):** Quarter note G4, eighth notes F#4, E4, D4, and a quarter rest. Measure 35: Quarter note D4, eighth notes C4, B3, A3, G3, and a quarter rest. Measure 36: Quarter note G3, eighth notes F#3, E3, D3, and a quarter rest.

Additional markings include "3" above measures 29 and 30, and "31" above measures 32 and 33. The Bb Cl. staff has a "Solo" marking above measure 36.

(continued)

Texas Moaner Blues

5

The musical score is for the piece "Texas Moaner Blues" and is page 5 of the score. It features three staves: Bb Tpt., Bb Cl., and Tbn. The key signature is Bb major (two flats). The score is divided into three systems, each starting at measure 37, 40, and 43 respectively.

System 1 (Measures 37-39):

- Bb Tpt.:** Measure 37 has a whole rest. Measure 38 has a whole rest. Measure 39 has a half note G4 and a quarter note A4.
- Bb Cl.:** Measure 37 has a half note F4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. Measure 38 has a half note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. Measure 39 has a half note F4, a quarter note E4, and a quarter note D4. There are triplets of eighth notes in measures 37, 38, and 39.
- Tbn.:** Measure 37 has a half note C3, a quarter note D3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 38 has a half note F3, a quarter note G3, and a quarter note A3. Measure 39 has a half note Bb3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note G3.

System 2 (Measures 40-42):

- Bb Tpt.:** Measure 40 has a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. Measure 41 has a half note C5, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. Measure 42 has a half note G4, a quarter note F4, and a quarter note E4.
- Bb Cl.:** Measure 40 has a half note F4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. Measure 41 has a half note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. Measure 42 has a half note F4, a quarter note E4, and a quarter note D4.
- Tbn.:** Measure 40 has a half note C3, a quarter note D3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 41 has a half note F3, a quarter note G3, and a quarter note A3. Measure 42 has a half note Bb3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note G3.

System 3 (Measures 43-45):

- Bb Tpt.:** Measure 43 has a half note G4, a quarter rest, and a quarter note A4. Measure 44 has a whole rest. Measure 45 has a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. Above measure 43 is the word "Break" with an accent mark.
- Bb Cl.:** Measure 43 has a half note F4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. Measure 44 has a half note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. Measure 45 has a half note F4, a quarter note E4, and a quarter note D4. There is a triplet of eighth notes in measure 43.
- Tbn.:** Measure 43 has a half note C3, a quarter note D3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 44 has a half note F3, a quarter note G3, and a quarter note A3. Measure 45 has a half note Bb3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note G3.

(continued)

6 Texas Moaner Blues

The musical score for 'Texas Moaner Blues' is presented in two systems. The first system, measures 46-48, features three staves: Bb Trumpet (Bb Tpt.), Bb Clarinet (Bb Cl.), and Tuba (Tbn.). The Bb Trumpet part begins with a whole rest in measure 46, followed by a melodic line. The Bb Clarinet part plays a continuous eighth-note pattern. The Tuba part provides a steady bass line. The second system, measures 49-50, shows the Bb Trumpet and Tuba continuing their parts, while the Bb Clarinet staff is marked 'To Clarinet' and contains a whole rest, indicating it is silent during this section.

Figure 2. Louis Armstrong's, Sidney Bechet's, and Charles Irvis's rendition of *Texas Moaner Blues*

The practice is reminiscent of Congo Square musicians who played various instruments utilizing the timbre of each with polyrhythmic exercises accompanying dancers and inspiring vocalists.⁵⁵ Period jazz musicians, Bechet, Armstrong and Charles Irvis, understood the roles of their instruments just as the Congo Square performing artists did almost a century earlier. Their comprehension is evident in *Texas Moaner Blues*. Historians Lewis Porter and Greg Ullman note the uniqueness of the

55. See Bechet's discussion of timbre and the traditional New Orleans brass band in his autobiography, *Treat It Gentle*, 85-94.

instrumentation: “One is immediately struck by the equality of the three lead voices: Armstrong on cornet, Bechet on clarinet, and Charles Irvis on trombone. (Perhaps they are too independent; the ensemble does not have an ideal coherent sound.)”⁵⁶ To the contrary, what the listener hears are three musicians not more than five years removed from the New Orleans scene and the relatively recent influences of pioneers Bolden and Robicheaux. They embraced their role(s) as it relates to the wind instruments in a traditional New Orleans brass band as seasoned musicians.

Armstrong and Bechet are well-versed in the blues tradition, and their choices on this recording are indicative of two young men who early in their careers comprehend the role of the genre in a traditional jazz band.⁵⁷ The success of their stop-time explorations, the shifting roles (Armstrong’s choices in the second chorus) and the completion of the collective musicianship (Bechet’s improvising a solo on soprano saxophone while maintaining intonation and character on both it and the clarinet) make this a seminal recording.

Further analysis of the wind instruments in this recording (Figure 2) unveils three aspects prevalent in West African and African-American music: (a) antiphonal effects, (b) rhythmic contrasts, and (c) call-response. The former is evident in the role Bechet takes in the initial chorus. After an initial two measure statement by Irvis, Bechet responds with a short reply, while maintaining the traditional function of the clarinetist.⁵⁸

56. Lewis Porter, and Greg Ullman, “Sidney Bechet and His Long Song,” *Black Perspectives in Music* 16, no.2, (Spring 1989): 140.

57. Armstrong and Bechet had extensive training in the blues tradition while coming of age as performing artists in New Orleans. The artists often refer to learning to play the “blues” in their memoir and autobiography (*Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans*, 64-71 and *Treat It Gentle*, 89-93).

A combination of the three aforementioned musical practices exists over the next four measures as Bechet does not wait until Irvis' statement is complete before coming back with a reply on the fourth beat of measure sixteen. His line continues to accompany Irvis' musical statement and is not completed until three full beats after Irvis has come to rest (measure nineteen) and despite the fact that Bechet's line is long and expressive, it maintains the responsorial characteristic established. In this context the responsorial musical ideas are done in response to the music played earlier in the piece. Armstrong assumes the role of the trombonist in measure twenty. His role is supportive as he fills in the space with the sensitivity of a seasoned musician. Armstrong occupies the space left when Bechet completes his response.⁵⁹ Armstrong's artistic choices here represent a courageous endeavor allowing for rhythmical differentiation (when compared to the previous measures) which in turn gives the listener a sense of double-time feeling that is not there (for example, Bechet's entrance on the upbeat of four).

Blues composer/theorist, and Harlem Renaissance entrepreneur, W.C. Handy believes African-American music contained two key elements: "The first of these is a marked insistent syncopation. The second is the novel element of filling in breaks."⁶⁰

Handy elaborates further when discussing the latter:

The Negro becomes impatient with silences, and fills in the rests-spaces with impromptu embellishments of his own. He slips in an 'OH Lawdy!' before the next regular beat is due. These natural improvisations are the foundations of Jazz....The grandson of the old gang worker who put in a simple 'Oh Lawdy' fills

58. The reader should note that Bechet also played the soprano saxophone on this 1924 recording which predates the technological ability to record on multiple tracks.

59. See measures twenty and twenty-two in Figure 2.

60. William Christopher Handy, "The Heart of the Blues." *Etude Music Magazine*. March, 1940, 152.

in with both virtuosity on the saxophone; but both are expressing the identical racial instinct in a typically racial way.”⁶¹

Bechet’s solo, (see Figure 2) in measure number thirty-six begins with the “novel” practice of filling up space and then proceeds to utilize responsorial effects with each measure while displaying rhythmic differentiation with superb articulation. The character established in the previous measures changes when he plays connecting musical phrases while bending notes with the characteristic Bechet vibrato. Bechet’s soprano saxophone solo also has vestiges of another aspect of West African musical practices. Specifically, as Bechet plays the first three measures have a responsorial effect. Similarly Olly Wilson surmises similar West African musical practice: “There seems to be a profusion of musical activities going on simultaneously, as if an attempt is being made to fill up every available area of musical space.”⁶² When Bechet’s solo changes character over the next three measures, an African-American approach is evident. Wilson notes that approach with regards to performance art practices, “It is a well-known fact that the performance technique a black jazz musician uses is not the same as that of his white symphonic counterpart and that this distinct manner of playing an instrument as if were an extension of the voice has been a unique Afro-American feature throughout history.”⁶³ Wilson’s description here precisely describes the separation and fascination with Black American performing art during the period considered here.

61. Ibid., 152.

62. Olly Wilson, “The Significance of African and African-American Music,” *Black Perspectives in Music* 2, no. 1 (Spring, 1974): 15.

63. Ibid.

Armstrong's artistry is evident in the 1924 recording of *Texas Moaner Blues*. It served as a pretense to the collective improvisation on display in Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven Bands during the rest of the decade.⁶⁴ While doing so Armstrong he still managed to change the focus from a collective collaboration to an individual art similar to his literary and visual counterparts. The recording propelled the traditional New Orleans jazz band's practice of collective improvisation and served as land mark for the performance of jazz and blues music. What is of significant note here is that vestiges of Armstrong's art can be heard in subsequent American music genres, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, soul, hard rock, and funk.

The Impact of Blues Music on the Harlem Renaissance

Composer, performing artist, and cultural theorist W.C. Handy displayed a keen business sense along with a degree of musicological instincts during the Harlem Renaissance. Years earlier while living in the South, he recognized the power of blues music. Interestingly, educator and activist Booker T. Washington may have inspired the former, sine in his autobiography *Up From Slavery*, Booker T. Washington advocated for the creation of a Negro Business League. The organization's mission was to establish a commercial infrastructure in the African-American community dedicated to economic empowerment. According to Washington,

In the summer of 1900 with the assistance of such prominent colored men as T. Thomas Fortune, who has always upheld my hands in every effort, I organized the National Negro Business League, which held its first meeting in Boston, and brought together for the first time a

⁶⁴. Armstrong recorded *Texas Moaner Blues* in New York then returned to Chicago and formed the Hot Five and Hot Seven Bands which are famous for recordings *Black and Blue* and *West End Blues*.

large number of coloured men who are engaged in various lines of trade or business in different parts of the United States.⁶⁵

By the time of his untimely death in 1915 and at the dawn of the “New Negro” sentiment, Washington was arguably one of the leading black American voices on education and black commerce. The former slave believed that successfully controlling the monetary ebb and flow via Negro entrepreneurship. To this end, African-American entrepreneur, Harry Pace joined blues music progenitors, Clarence Williams and W.C. Handy, to form a publishing and recording company called Black Swan Records.⁶⁶ Under their leadership, the genre continued an aesthetic ascendance in American culture. The company successfully recruited and recorded blues writers and performing artists. Handy alone authored hundreds of songs including “St. Louis Blues” and “Memphis Blues.” Subsequently, sales and performances of blues music rose between 1923 and the stock market crash of 1929. Armstrong’s art (instrumental and vocal) was heard increasingly during the same years as he recorded in an accompanying role one hundred and fourteen times during those years. Researcher Gilbert Erskine believes, “It is no secret that Louis Armstrong did some of his best playing accompanying singers on recordings in the 1920s.”⁶⁷ Armstrong’s increasing number of recordings as an accompanist is testimony to the growing respect for his artistry and the recognition of his popularity.

65. Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 222.

66. See Eileen Southern’s discussion of the Pace Recording Company in *The Music of Black Americans* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 370-71.

67. Gilbert Erskine, “‘Countin’ the Blues: A Survey of the Recordings Of Louis Armstrong Accompanying Singers In The 1920s,”” *The Second Line*, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University, (Spring 1976): 10.

Blues music's rise in popularity and consequent influence on the period's literary, visual and performing arts can be attributed many indicators. The availability of radios and phonographs to not only middle and upper income families, but also low-income citizens was a contributing factor. Many if not most were becoming gainfully employed in industries that supported the war effort. Certainly the migration to major industrial centers such as Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and New York played a major role in the cultural shift. Specifically, the cultural instinct to bring mores, folkways and indeed music from one region to a new one is not uncommon for a group. Researcher Elijah Wald surmises, "Ever since the Civil War, black southerners have been leaving the country-side and heading for urban areas, crowding the booming black districts of Dallas, Memphis and Atlanta. After World War I, this trend was greatly accelerated, and by the 1930s most of these emigrants were heading for industrial centers farther north: St. Louis, Detroit, Chicago, and New York."⁶⁸ There existed among many southern African-Americans a desire to escape the vestiges of Jim Crow south which bound them and their posterity to sharecropping, increased organized terrorist activities, and limited educational opportunities. All too often resistance to the oppressive system was met with violence and no protection from authorities. Performing, and listening to blues music became a coping mechanism. Period researcher David Levering Lewis offered this statistical analysis of the population shift:

Chicago's Afro-American population increased in the decade after 1910 to 1920 by 148.2 percent, most of the migrants arriving after 1917. There was a similar increase in Detroit, where migrants from the South swelled the Afro-American population by no less than 611.3 percent; Indianapolis, 59 percent; Cincinnati,

68. Elijah Wald, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. 2004), 38.

53.2 percent; Pittsburgh, 47.2 percent. Three hundred thousand, and possibly many more, Afro-American farmers, unskilled laborers, and domestics left the South before 1920.⁶⁹

The change in the region's demographics meant a shift in cultural behaviors, aesthetics, and musical choices in the northern industrial areas. Harlem did not escape what was to some a cultural awakening but to others, a recollection of an oppressive life in the South. Period detractors openly questioned the validity of an African-American art movement.

One can gain a glimpse into the commercial importance of blues music at the dawn of the period considered here. The commencement of the twentieth century's third decade gave rise to a surge in an interest in blues music as a possible business venture. Indeed, the Okeh recording company was one of the earliest organizations to capitalize on the attraction of the Southern African-American folk music. Researcher L.A. Jackson notes Okeh's success after Mamie Smith's 1920 recording of *Crazy Blues*: "1920 recording of *Crazy Blues* by black composer Perry Bradford was released on legendary label Okeh label. *Crazy Blues* jump started the 'race record' industry (the term used for records aimed at black consumers) and things were never the same again, as average sales of this music climbed to 5 million units a year."⁷⁰ By 1926, Columbia Records bought the company capitalizing on field recordings in rural areas of the South.

Criticisms of Armstrong's Art

Many black Americans rejected Louis Armstrong's art because of a contemptuous attitude developed from a real and perceived disdain for minstrelsy. Critics associated

69. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 20.

70. L.A. Jackson, ed. Anna R. Holloway, PhD., *Musicology 2101: A Quick Start Guide to Music Biz History* (Atlanta: MKM Publishing, 2010), 111.

Armstrong's demeanor on stage with images and caricatures from nineteenth-century minstrel shows. Some critics such as Terry Teachout in his Louis Armstrong biography *Pops*, and George Schuyler in his essay *The Negro Art-Hokum*, argued that Armstrong's art and other works of the period have no connection to Afro-centricity. In fact both ends of the continuum (those who related his artistic choices to vestiges of Afro-centric culture and those who preferred to place the artist in a pure western art context) agree that the majesty of Armstrong's art has no bearing on the debate. Armstrong's childhood influences were the result of the economic pressures present in most of the second and third generations of post-slavery families. Social choices that resulted in pernicious behaviors are not to be romanticized or excused. One should note that Armstrong often referred to the importance and impact of said detrimental behaviors (gambling, prostitution, and drug usage) while coming of age in New Orleans. Interestingly, some writers and critics embrace the performing arts of the period (early New Orleans jazz) but choose to make social commentary on the music's creators. Armstrong biographer Terry Teachout chose to use the pejorative term "bastards" to place a perspective on the artist's upbringing while making a social commentary on life with un-wed parents, a social malady, unfortunately, suffered by many in New Orleans at the turn of the century.⁷¹ Teachout's choice is a conscious effort to place the cultural group's existence within a moral context regarding the mores and folkways of the group considered. Thus the challenge of documenting Louis Armstrong's artistic contributions to the Harlem Renaissance requires qualitative analysis (see Figure 1). Subsequently, this research

71. See the first chapter of Terry Teachout's biography titled "Bastards from the Start: Apprenticeship in New Orleans 1901-1919" in *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), 23-50.

explores not only the popularity of blues music and Armstrong's contribution to the genre's acceptance in America, but also its existence as a functional art created to eliminate or cope with life's maladies. Indeed, Armstrong and all of the period's artists had the temerity to create in an era that simultaneously encouraged and codified their instincts.

Armstrong's art attracted increasing notoriety when his career began to skyrocket after 1923 with the release of *Chimes Blues*. His improvisational choices while serving as Joe "King" Oliver's sideman caused a stir among fellow musicians and blues lovers alike. The musicians began to embrace the possibilities of improvisation as the impetus jazz music. Simultaneously, consumer aesthetics gravitated to the art. Cultural theorist Thomas Dewey described the phenomena as the, "perceiver must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent."⁷² Dewey's theory is apparent in the literary art of Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, and others. Similarly, period visual artists Aaron Douglass, Romare Bearden, Archibald Motley Jr., Roland Barthe, Meta Warrick Fuller and others not only recognized, but created art that captured the depth of the period's cultural indicators. Indeed, the performance of jazz and blues music in varied venues inspired much of the artist's depictions (see Figure 1).

Blues music became more than a unifying aesthetic. It also functioned as an art through which the maladies of everyday life, particularly for African-Americans, can be identified or acknowledged through lyrics. The power to begin the process of liberation

72. Thomas Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959), 54.

after identifying problems with one's life was also not lost on literary and visual artists.⁷³ Du Bois used his 1926 NAACP Convention keynote address to encourage black artists to use their creations including blues music as tools to agitate for equality as well as an 'expose' on black life in America. According to Du Bois, "All art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists."⁷⁴ Indeed, Du Bois's admonitions helped ignite a debate about the role of the period's art. Cultural critic and conservative columnist George Schuyler adopted a contrary view. He thought that Negro art as such was nonexistent and had no place in the pantheon of American culture. Cultural theorists like Schuyler shared a belief that because African-American culture was far removed from any West African influences, it was devoid of any African or ethnic uniqueness. Period researcher George Hutchinson postulates, "More important than the idea of the traditional 'Africaness' of African American culture to the Harlem Renaissance was the idea that black Americans, unlike any other group, had been almost completely stripped of their ancestral cultural identity, and precisely because of this had developed the most authentically American folk culture."⁷⁵ Jazz researcher Sidney Finkelstein's admonitions reflect Hutchinson's reasoning. According to Finkelstein, "Jazz is not even 'Afro-American,' a term comparatively new and popular among jazz theoreticians. To use such a hyphenated term implies that there are two Americas."⁷⁶ This research seeks to disprove

73. This writer became aware of blues music's role as a liberating force in black American life from musician Branford Marsalis in *Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns* (Episode One, Gumbo, 2000).

74. W.E.B Du Bois, "The Criteria of Negro Art," *Crisis Magazine* (October 1926): 10-11.

75. George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1995), 76.

76. *Ibid.*, 19.

Schuyler and Finkelstein's theories. Beyond the contributions from West Africa to world culture, the vestiges of performing art practices (call-response, communal music-making, and stratified rhythms) considered here were present in Congo Square are the foundations of jazz and blues music.

Harlem Renaissance literary artist, Langston Hughes adopted a contrary view. He embraced the concept of using racial identity when creating art. Months after Schuyler's published his theories in *The Negro Art-Hokum*, Hughes wrote an essay titled to the contrary titled *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*. A comparative analysis of Schuyler's 1926 article, *The Negro Art-Hokum* and Hughes's response reveals contrasting views. Schuyler did not see any artistic value in "Negro art." He believed any desire to embrace a performing art genre that is distinctly African-American is fool-hardy. Schuyler also thought that any ethnic group would have experienced similar successes.

Hughes, on the other hand, embraced the ethnic pride that inspired "Negro art," and in the context of the period considered here, held contrary views to those striving for acceptance by mainstream American culture. He recognized fellow literary artist Jean Toomer as a seminal contributor to the period's canon. In this context, Hughes admonished a young black writer to resist those who urge him or her to avoid African-American themes: "Both would have told Jean Toomer not to write *Cane*."⁷⁷ Hughes comments further, "They are afraid of it. Although the critics gave it good reviews the public remained indifferent. Yet (excepting for the work of Du Bois) *Cane* contains the finest prose written by a Negro in America. And it like the singing of Robeson, it is

77. Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation* CXXII (June 1926): 290-97.

racial.”⁷⁸ Toomer’s experience is indicative of the struggles of many artists who were frustrated after acting on the instinct to produce African-American art. Researcher Cary Winz notes Toomer’s difficulties after writing *Cane*: “Toomer did see several essays and poems appear in print, but he died in obscurity, frustrated by his inability to market his work. Many scholars argued that he failed because he rejected his African-American heritage after *Cane* appeared, and cite his two marriages to white women as evidence.”⁷⁹ Expressing patriotism through dissent was to become a theme in much of the period’s artistic discourse. Indeed, the failure of the federal government to guarantee the rights of African-Americans, as well as protect returning veterans and their families from the act of terrorism fueled much of the period’s art.

One of the critical aspects of the rituals and mores in New Orleans is the inescapable presence of cultural behaviors whose roots lie in the practices of the enslaved and free people of color in the region. The impact of these cultural behaviors on American music was as important as any other performing art. Armstrong codified the area’s unique approach to the performing arts and gave the world a variety of trumpet solos indicative of the period’s artistry. This research will show that he had an extraordinary ability to transform the New Orleans early jazz wind instrument polyphony (particularly their roles in recordings from 1924 *Texas Moaner Blues* to 1962 *In My Solitude*). His genius was not lost on the consumer as blues recording artists Ma Rainey,

78. Ibid.

79. Carl Winz, “The Harlem Renaissance, 1920-1940: The Critics and the Harlem Renaissance,” Vol. 4, *African American Review* Vol. 32, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998): 497.

Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters all used him as a sideman on their recordings.⁸⁰

Armstrong's improvisational vocal choices were just as impactful. He was one of the first male blues recording stars and fueled a rise in record sales. His vocal style was imitated just as much as his instrumental creations. More importantly, he developed his vocal instincts while coming of age in New Orleans.⁸¹ Many artists such as Bechet and Bunk Johnson commented on his early reputation as a member of a singing group impressing those who heard them on the streets of the city.

Armstrong and his group developed an ability to imitate instruments using syllabic inferences, while maintaining a musical style reminiscent of ragtime music in the context of the aforementioned New Orleans wind instrument polyphony. According to Bechet, "It was Bunk Johnson who was the first to make me acquainted with Louis Armstrong. Bunk told me about this quartet Louis was singing in. 'Sidney,' he said, 'I want you to go hear a little quartet, how they sing and harmonize.'"⁸² It is a mistake to suppose this and other musical instincts of the period's artists (called "jungle" music) were the result of natural or inherent ability. It took Armstrong and other early jazz musicians years of practice and street performances to evolve into what we hear in recordings, such as *The Heebie Jeebies* and *West End Blues*. There was an evolvement (codified instrumental roles, indoor-outdoor performance practices including their function as a part of funeral rituals) in New Orleans of the performing art known as jazz

80. See Terry Teachout's discussion regarding this matter in *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), 89-92.

81. The reader is encouraged to read Sidney Bechet's recollection of young Armstrong singing for tips with a quartet on the streets of New Orleans in his autobiography, *Treat It Gentle*.

82. Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 98.

and blues music from the time of Armstrong's birth in 1901 to his departure in 1919. The performing art experienced a similar creative growth during the Harlem Renaissance as it helped inspire political and, philosophical thought, as well as literary and visual art themes. Certainly, early twentieth century New Orleans did not attract philosophers, literary and visual artists like Harlem. However, the popularity of the live music scene and performing arts culture in New Orleans from 1900-1919 rivals any municipality in the world.⁸³

An Unintended Cultural Agglutination

In summary, the period between 1900 and 1930 in black America gave rise to artistic achievements, identification of social ills, and suggested solutions. The answers at times directly conflicted with each other. Nowhere was the conflict-solution paradigm more evident than in the Booker T. Washington's and W.E.B. Du Bois's approach to solving the race problem in America.⁸⁴ The debate continues as to who was right or wrong. This research, seeks to describe each philosopher's thoughts including similarities and their impact on the period's philosophy, politics and subsequently art. Washington's influence on education at historical black colleges cannot be overstated. His ideals can be seen in institutions such as The Colored Boys Waifs' Home, where young Louis Armstrong spent several months and received formal music training.

Journalist, cultural critic, and Booker T. Washington devotee, George Schuyler was typical of the period's detractors who questioned not only the validity, but the very

83. See Armstrong's *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans*, 211-40.

84. See Du Bois's discussion regarding Washington's industrial education views in *The Souls of Black Folk*, 57-81.

existence of an arts movement in Harlem's Black community. Schuyler's criticism was three-fold. He thought the period was nonexistent; its black artists would be better served producing art as mimeticists, and that they were under an illusion believing their creations were unique with distinctive African-American features. According to Schuyler: "I argued that such performance by colored American artists would in the very nature of things be distinguishable from other American art; that the American Negro was a lampblackened [sic] Anglo-Saxon, and could no more escape the imprint of his environment than colored people in other lands had done."⁸⁵ Schuyler's attitude is indicative of the Eurocentric hermeneutical approach to the critique of art. Activist Paulo Freire suggests this is the result of a successful cultural invasion because "it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority. Since everything has its opposite, if those who are invaded consider themselves inferior, they must necessarily recognize the superiority of the invaders."⁸⁶ Armstrong as well as other Renaissance artists fully embraced (just as those claiming to be in the nationalistic movement in Europe) the collective experiences of being African-American. Schuyler's discussion was published when much of the period's performing arts were reaching its zenith. That same year Armstrong's seminal recording of Fats Waller's *Black and Blue* was released. Schuyler and critics of blues music failed to recognize the cultural impact and the collective African-American aesthetic of not only the blues music genre, but the genius

85. George Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George Schuyler* (New York: Arlington House Publishers, 1966), 157.

86. Paulo Friere, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 154.

and revolution in Armstrong's relatively new art; a revolution that forever changed the music and an individual artist's approach to making it.

By 1928, the year Armstrong recorded *West End Blues*, blues music was already an iconic entity in the American folk song canon. It was indeed an integral part of American culture, helping create an economic boom during the third decade of the twentieth century to the music industry. Though romanticized by many consumers as the music of a people far removed from their existence, (many migrated to northern urban areas like Harlem) African-American folk-art was in reality born from the recognition by black musicians of the forces responsible for their stifling oppression, particularly in the Jim Crow South. Freire acknowledged that one of the steps to freedom is recognizing who or what are the sources of the oppression. Freire surmises, "To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity."⁸⁷ Armstrong's artistic choices, particularly when playing blues music, are evidence of such recognition.

Though relatively young, and in the commencement of a blossoming career, Armstrong had done hundreds of blues recordings with the likes of Bessie Smith, Sidney Bechet, and Joe "King" Oliver.⁸⁸ His recorded artistic choices between 1924 and 1928 were receiving as much critical acclaim as was his live performances. Though his art was in the skeletal stages of transforming American music, his critical acclaim was on a trajectory. However, he and other Renaissance artists were not beyond experiencing the

87. Ibid., 29.

88. See Armstrong's discography as a sideman at the end of this research.

oppression that served as the impetus for the creation of blues music. In the context of Friere's theory on liberation, the period artists musically transformed his or her existence by rejecting the pre-subscribed "jungle music" image. According to Friere the oppressed must, "eject the image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift."⁸⁹ Subsequently, in *West End Blues*, Armstrong "internalized the oppressor" when he began with an introductory trumpet fanfare in the traditional western art music setting.⁹⁰ After reaching a tonal zenith, his improvisation continued when he created a blues melodic descent to the tonic, giving no hint of the dirge-like melody that followed.⁹¹ His improvisational choices at that point were indicative of Friere's concept of an artist free from the "fear of freedom."

Many who might otherwise serve as the oppressing group in fact benefitted from Armstrong's creative transformations attained from losing the "fear of freedom" as they increasingly consumed the art during the period. According to Friere, "Although the situation of oppression is a dehumanized and dehumanizing totality affecting both the oppressor and those of whom they oppress, it is the latter who must from their stifled humanity, wage for both the struggle for a fuller humanity..."⁹² Blues music's popularity is indicative of Friere's theory. Armstrong revolutionized vocal styles in a still developing American song book, giving the genre a much needed nationalistic ambience. Charles Black, who became one of the white attorneys and legal architects of the

89. Ibid., 29.

90. See music transcription (Figure 3) in Chapter III.

91. See music transcriptions (Figures 3 and 4) in Chapter III.

92. Ibid.

NAACP's arguments in *Brown v. Board of Education*, as a teenager he heard Armstrong and was inspired to view race relations from the ironic paradigm which suggests nobility present in an artist who is oppressed yet produces art with such magnitude.⁹³

Indeed Armstrong was as much aware of the conditions of African-Americans as other Renaissance artists. Though much of his time during the movement was spent in Chicago, the extent of the nation's social ills was such that he could not have escaped anti-lynching campaigns, the growth of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, and the popularity of the NAACP. In New York, he would have performed in or frequented the same venues available to him as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Zora Neal Hurston, and others. He was aware of his own popularity as a part of Fletcher Henderson's group as well as his recording of *Black and Blue*. One of Armstrong's greatest accomplishments as an improvisational artist, was changing the critical focus of jazz music from the group to the individual soloist while changing the landscape of American vocal music with a vocalize approach, unheard of before in American music.

Theoretical Framework

One of this nation's most important contributors to American music is Louis Armstrong. Biographers and musicologists have successfully researched and published his role in shifting America's cultural gift to the world, jazz music, from an ensemble-focused performing art to an emphasis on the individual soloist during the period considered here. It is important to note that he was not the only artist significantly contributing to the Harlem Renaissance. For example the contributions of Edward

93. See *Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns*, Episode Three, *Our Language* [Alexandria, VA], PBS Home Video, 2004.

“Duke” Ellington, Fats Waller, Eubie Blake and Fletcher Henderson cannot be overstated. To this end, Louis Armstrong’s improvisational approach to blues music on recordings and live performances as a sideman and as the lead artist between 1923 and 1930 sets him apart from other contributors. However, in much of the literature written about the proclivities of the Harlem Renaissance, the artistic contributions of Louis Armstrong are underestimated and under-researched. Armstrong’s creative choices between the years 1923-30 infinitely influenced and inspired the literary, performing and visual arts as well as the political and philosophical debate during the Harlem Renaissance (see Figure 1). Subsequently, there were interrelatedness and cross-influences between the period’s contributing entities. This research shows that Armstrong’s presence on blues and jazz recordings as well as his public performances in Chicago with Joe “King” Oliver, in New York with The Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, and his own “Hot Five” and “Hot Seven” bands helped fuel a rise in the popularity of blues and jazz music which coincidentally was the source of inspiration to many of the period’s literary, performing and visual artists.

The popularity of the arts mentioned above inspired a philosophical debate regarding the existence and purpose of the period’s arts and leading figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, and George Schuyler led the discussion. This research shall explore the discussion in the context of Theodor Adorno’s theories regarding music as expressed in *On Popular Music*. Additionally, W.E.B. Du Bois’s (art is propaganda and should be used to agitate for a political and social change) 1926 speech to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People titled

The Criteria of Negro Art shall serve as the context for the purpose of the period's art. In contrast, Alain Locke theorized two years later in an essay titled *Art or Propaganda* that black artists should acquiesce to Euro-centric models to gain acceptance from the dominant culture. This research will explore opposing theories expressed by George Schuyler in *The Negro Art-Hokum* and Langston Hughes's *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*. Schuyler believed that not only is African-American art non-existent, but the individuals extolling the virtues of such art are in fact harmful to progress in post-World War I America. Hughes on the other hand adopted an opposing position arguing that African-American artists should proudly use the proclivities of life in America as a source of their art. This research also places an analysis of Hughes's aforementioned essay and Armstrong's creative choices (detailed in a music transcription) in *West End Blues* in the context of Paulo Friere's *Fear of Freedom* theory. Friere opines, "To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming actions they can create a new situation, one which makes possible pursuit of a fuller humanity."⁹⁴ The transcriptions and corresponding analyses will show that the act of recognizing the source(s) of one's problems and prescribing solutions are at the heart of blues music.

Research Methodology

This research utilizes textual and discourse analysis of the literary, visual and performing arts during the period considered here and was inspired by the social and political climate leading to and after World War I. The analysis is phenomenological

94. Paulo Friere, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 1970), 29.

from qualitative data. The data collection included primary sources such as W.C. Handy's 1929 letter explaining declining revenues to his client explaining and this researcher's interview with Dr. Arthur Berry a student of period visual artist Aaron Douglas were integral to the writer's findings. The artistic accomplishments, particularly as they relate to the political leanings and philosophical conclusions during the years leading up to the period considered here. Consequently, the analysis is epistemological as it is placed in the context of the post-World War I social atmosphere that helped ignite the "New Negro" philosophy, and the elevated artistic and political activity that became known as the Harlem Renaissance. Additionally, analyses of music transcriptions of selected Armstrong recordings were used to reveal the impact of his improvisational art on the rise blues music's popularity in American culture. To this end, the analysis of the 1924 recording of *Texas Moaner Blues*, and the 1926 collaboration with Bessie Smith titled *St Louis Blues* was placed in the context of John Dewey's *Art As Experience* theory published in 1959. The cultural theorist believes that the consumer must, "create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent."⁹⁵

This research also uses textual analyses of Langston Hughes's and Sterling Brown's literary works *Weary Blues* and *Ma Rainey* respectively to show the blues music's impact on the writers' styles as well as the period's collective aesthetics.

95. Thomas Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959), 210.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Between 1923 and 1930, there was a flurry of artistic, political, and philosophical activity in Harlem, New York. The spirit of activism was the result of a renewed sense of social purpose, as Harlem was home to prominent organizations such as the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*, the *Urban League*, and the *Universal Negro Improvement Association*. The first two groups were inspired by and contributed to the belief that America was poised to give African-Americans their constitutionally guaranteed rights, especially after their heroic contributions to the World War I effort. The latter's philosophy was to the contrary, as they encouraged a mass exodus and repatriation to the continent of Africa.¹ The spirit of activism was partially fueled by a renewed sense of African and African-American historical contributions, as Harlem was also home to historians Arnold Schomburg and Carter G. Woodson. Additionally, aspiring visual, literary and performing artists also chose Harlem as their place of residence. The prospects of freely creating in various genres and mediums attracted many artists.

However, some critics and patrons challenged artists to create within Western art parameters. W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, George Schuyler, and Langston Hughes were

1. Marcus Garvey's *Universal Negro Improvement Association* had a significant impact on the psyche of the Harlem Renaissance. Africa and African contributions became an inspiration to many of the period's artists and philosophers.

prominent contributors to this discussion. Simultaneously, the popularity of blues music was on a trajectory, and performing artist Louis Armstrong was one of the genre's seminal artists. His recordings, from *Chimes Blues* in 1923 to *Blue Yoddle No. 9* in 1930, as well as his more than one hundred contributions as an accompanist to other blues music artists, made him one of the period's most influential performing artists.² Indeed, Louis Armstrong's creative choices came on the heels of the "New Negro" sentiment, and they not only changed the canon of America's early twentieth-century popular music, but it also inspired a nationalistic fervor in African-American visual and literary arts. Subsequently, this literature review is an examination of the scholarly and artistic productions of the Harlem Renaissance and the pertinent publications that affirmed the period's cultural contributions as well as the opposing view specifically postulated by cultural critic George Schuyler.

Beyond Louis Armstrong's art and the body of visual and literary works, some felt the period was nothing more than a figment of the imagination of liberal-minded but well-meaning patrons of black American artists seeking affirmation in the midst of the post-World War I economic boom and aesthetic curiosities.³ African-American cultural critic and conservative activist George Schuyler was chief among them. Schuyler argues that black American culture and art must acquiesce to Euro-centric cultural standards and any identification with Afro-centrism is foolhardy and Western art parameters should be the only goal of African-American artists.

2. See detailed discography of Armstrong as a leader and sideman at the end of this research.

3. See Houston Baker Jr.'s *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), xv, xvi.

Inspired by the teachings and philosophy of Booker T. Washington, Schuyler's conservative leanings are evident, as he sides with those who argued against organized labor, suggesting that the labor movement was inspired by socialism and owed its tenets solely to Karl Marx, making those who aspired for increased wages and union organizing pro-Communism. In his 1926 essay, *The Negro Art-Hokum*, Schuyler postulates that the literary, visual, and performing arts produced during this period were, in fact, sub-par, and the products of black artists who were less capable of achieving the level of quality produced by their Caucasian counterparts. He argues that any artistic work created in America owes its existence to Euro-centric training and aesthetics. Schuyler also believes that genres germane to African-American life are coincidental. "It is merely a coincidence that this peasant class happens to be of a darker hue than the other inhabitants of the land."⁴ Schuyler also speculates that artists who solely use African-American themes have an inability to assimilate and function within the parameters of the dominant culture, thus confirming the adage that they represent a group of Americans who lack the intellect to participate in society.

By 1929, Schuyler recognized that much of the consuming white American public had embraced African-American arts. He expresses his exasperation with the phenomenon in his essay, *Our Greatest Gift to America*. Similar to his opinions expressed years earlier in *The Negro Art-Hokum*, when he admonished artists not to embrace creations that explicitly expressed African-American concerns, Schuyler discourages any connection to Africa. The critic opines, "Negro art there has been, and will be among the numerous black nations of Africa; but to suggest the possibility of any

4. George Schuyler, "The Negro Art-Hokum," *The Nation* CXXII (June 16, 1926): 662-63.

such development among the ten million colored people in this republic is self-evident foolishness.”⁵ Schuyler expresses sarcasm toward black artists who claim there is a racial component in the period’s art. Specifically, African-American visual artistic expressions possess Euro-centric aesthetics and are imitative, as well as lacking cultural distinction. According to Schuyler, “As for literature, painting, and sculpture of Aframericans---such as there is---it is identical in kind with the literature, painting, and sculpture of white Americans; that is it shows more or less evidence of European influence.”⁶ He expresses similar views with the period’s black literary arts. Interestingly, though, while Schuyler acknowledges the uniqueness of the period’s performing arts, he contended that they were primarily the product of blacks from the South and foreign to those who were not products of the war-related migration. Schuyler does, however, fondly recalls his experiencing the performing arts in Harlem: “It was there (Lafayette Theater) that I first heard Mamie Smith singing the blues, and many of the best musicians of the day. Fats Waller played the organ at the Lincoln, and on Seventh Avenue near West 135th Street, Pace and Handy had an office for their *Black Swan Records*, which are now collectors’ items much sought after by jazz fans.”⁷ Schuyler’s skepticism and distrust of those who advocated for social change, led him to write scathing articles suggesting communist involvement with the Scottsboro Boys defense and decades later, the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Martin Luther King Jr.

5. George Schuyler, “Our Greatest Gift to America,” *Anthology of American Negro Literature* ed. C.V. Calverton (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1929), 192.

6. George Schuyler, “The Negro Art-Hokum,” 662-63.

7. George Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George Schuyler* (New York: Arlington House publishers, 1966), 124-25.

However, Schuyler's premise is that the successes of the period's black arts did more to reinforce the narrative of white supremacy. He believes that beyond any economic or cultural barriers, Euro-Americans enjoy the benefits of a political and social system that is exclusively theirs. Schuyler states, "It is not surprising, then, that democracy has worked better in this country than elsewhere. This belief in equality of all white folks—making skin color the gauge of worth and measure of citizenship rights—has the lowest to strive to become among the highest."⁸ He also takes aim at scholars who proposed a renewed look at African history and its place or lack thereof in Western curricula. In *The Negro Art-Hokum*, he adopts a cynical view aimed at such historians as Carter G. Woodson who was instrumental in creating *The Journal of Negro History*. Woodson published *The Mis-Education of the Negro* which details the purposeful and deliberate exclusion of historical and cultural contributions of African-Americans to America and the world. Woodson was at the receiving end of Schuyler's sarcasm as the critic loathed the rejuvenated research into African and African-American history beyond slavery. Often, researchers hosted forums with guest lecturers such as Woodson and Arnold Schomberg. According to Schuyler, "On such occasions there will be some notable Aframericans speakers such as Prof. Hambone of Monrovia Institute or Dr. Lampblack of the Federal Society for the Exploitation of Lynching, who will eloquently hold forth for the better part of an hour on the blackamoor's gift to the Great Republic and why, therefore, he should not be kept down."⁹ Schuyler's disdain for those who

8. "Our Greatest Gift to America," *Anthology of American Negro Literature* ed. C.V. Calverton (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1929), 192.

9. George Schuyler, "The Negro Art-Hokum," 662-63.

advocated for a renewed sense of history is indicative of an early twentieth-century black conservatism ideal that believes successful social change will happen through assimilation into the dominant culture or adherence to Western parameters.

Historian, scholar, curator, and Harlem resident, Arturo Schomburg was one of the period's leading researchers and historians who held a contrary perspective. Schomburg served as the curator for the historical collection at the community's library, now a part of the New York Public Library. In 1925, the West Indian native wrote an essay detailing the little-known scholarly research into African contributions to world history. The expose was titled *The Negro Digs Up His Past*. Schomburg notes the necessity for such a literary work in his introduction. "For him, a group tradition must supply compensation for persecution, and pride of race, the antidote for prejudice. History must restore what slavery took away, for it is the social damage of slavery that the present generations must repair and offset."¹⁰ The work chronicles efforts by historians to prove not only African contributions to world history and culture but also scholarly works by many West Indian writers and researchers which include Juan Latino's 1576 book of poems, *Escorial*. Predictably, Schomburg's research did not escape Schuyler's wrath: "The more erudite of these self-appointed spokesmen for the race will even go back to the garden of Eden, the walls of Babylon, the pyramids of Egypt and the palaces of Ethiopia by way of introduction, and during the prefatory marks they will not fail, often, to claim for the Negro race every person of importance that has

10. Arturo Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past," *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Nathan Irvin Huggins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 217-21.

ever resided on the face of the earth.”¹¹ Notably, Schomburg’s vast collection of African, African-American, and West Indian scholarly contributions is housed in the Harlem library named for him.

Schuyler’s conservatism is apparent in his steadfast views regarding labor unions, despite boasting of a friendship and frequent discussions with union organizer and civil rights leader, A. Phillip Randolph. According to Schuyler, “Many a time we would stop and laugh over some Socialist cliché’ or dubious generalization, and at such times I realized Randolph was wiser than I had imagined. Still there was a strain of idealism in the man that persisted through the years from his arrival in New York in 1915 when he began organizing hotel workers.”¹² Months after the end of World War I, Randolph expresses a disdain for the conservative views and an affinity for socialism in a 1919 essay titled *A New Crowd---A New Negro*. Randolph offers his opinion: “The Old crowd enjoins the Negro to be conservative, when he has nothing to conserve. Neither his life nor his property receives the protection of the government which conscripts his life to ‘make the world safe for democracy.’ The conservative in all lands are wealthy and a ruling class.”¹³ Randolph’s frustrations expressed here are indicative of the disappointment shared by many African-Americans who believed their patriotism and contributions to the war effort were enough to ensure enfranchisement and equal rights.

11. George Schuyler, “Our Greatest Gift to America,” *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, ed. C.V. Calverton (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1929), 61.

12. George Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George Schuyler*, 136.

13. Asa Phillip Randolph, *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Nathan Irvin Huggins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 18.

One of the period's more critically acclaimed writers was Langston Hughes. Hughes's body of work, written between 1923 and 1930, reflects an artist willing to embrace African-American culture and the cultural behaviors generic to Harlem. He took exception to Schuyler's position regarding Negro art, and in his 1926 essay *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, Hughes argues that African-American artists should embrace their heritage and celebrate its uniqueness through any genre or medium. Contrary to Schuyler, Hughes cautions black artists not to base their success upon Euro-centric barometers. Hughes describes the influence of black performing arts on his work: "Most of my own poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know. In many of them I try to grasp and hold some of the meanings and rhythms of jazz."¹⁴ Interestingly, Hughes's thoughts here are contrary to other black cultural critics who, like Schuyler, thought that making Euro-centric choices was the best way to earn critical acclaim. Most notable among these was cultural critic Alain Locke.

By 1924, the number of young black American artists was on the rise in Harlem. Locke believed that the artists needed more opportunities to be read, seen, and heard. He published a periodical titled the Survey Magazine, dedicated to the promotion of literary and visual artistic works of many young artists. In the introduction to his inaugural publication, titled *The New Negro*, Locke agrees with using ethnic or "Negro" themes in the arts and views the relatively new contributions of African-American artists as a new

14. Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *The Nation* (June 23, 1926): 692-94.

era of American art and an exhibition of a collective “race co-operation.”¹⁵ Locke also acknowledges the significance of art that has a distinct racial identity and compares it to the already existing shift toward “nationalism” in European arts. Locke juxtaposes the impact of Black American art on African-Americans, with similar cultural expressions evident in the Nationalistic movement in western art. Locke opines, “That is why our comparison is taken with those nascent centers of folk-expression and self-determination which are playing a creative part in the world today.”¹⁶ Rather than disregarding, any racial identity associated with the art (the position Schuyler takes), Locke embraces the yearnings of black artists who longed to have their works accepted in mainstream American culture. According to Locke, “Therefore the Negro today wishes to be known for what he is, even in his faults and shortcomings, and scorns a craven and precarious survival at the price of seeming to be what he is not.”¹⁷ However, in his 1928 essay *Art or Propaganda*, Locke agrees with Schuyler’s position that embracing distinctly Negro art is admitting to a degree of inferiority: “My chief objection to propaganda, apart from its besetting sin of monotony and disproportion, is that it perpetuates the position of inferiority even when crying against it.”¹⁸ Indeed, Locke’s position comes from a Manichean point of view. Though he theorizes that embracing art that is thematically African-American is admitting to a degree of inferiority, Locke was a conduit for many of the period’s literary and visual artists, whose expressions were inspired by the black

15. Alain Locke, “The New Negro,” *The New Negro*. ed. Alain Locke (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1925), 631-34.

16. Ibid., 634.

17. Ibid.

18. Alain Locke, “Art as Propaganda,” *Harlem* (November, 1928): 219.

American experience. To this end, he promoted and published works by significant Harlem Renaissance writers, including Zora Neal Hurston, Sterling Brown, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay.

Through his periodical, *Survey Graphic* magazine Locke was partially responsible for recruiting Aaron Douglas, one of the most influential visual artists of the period. Douglas biographer Amy Kirschke commented in her biography *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance*. Kirschke surmises, “As it turned out, Douglas was profoundly impressed by the ‘spectacular issue’ of *Survey Graphic* magazine, the periodical that would later be expanded to become Alain Locke’s book *The New Negro*.”¹⁹ One should note that Locke was also responsible for procuring financial support for black artists from many white patrons. Conversely, Schuyler’s attitude regarding Negro art helped to promote a fractious atmosphere as he chose to ignore the nationalistic proclivities in the music of the Harlem Renaissance, yet he yearned for all that is good with the same nationalistic fervor in much of the Euro-centric art music.

Period activist, sociologist, and co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, W.E.B. Du Bois argued that Black American art is created only as a tool for propaganda. He seized the opportunity to disclose his position during the 1926 NAACP Convention, in which he delivered a keynote speech titled *The Criteria for Negro Art*. Du Bois believed it was the duty of black artists to express the proclivities of the African-American experience in the various genres. Contrary to Schuyler’s and Locke’s Eurocentric concept of beauty, Du Bois argues that the inherent

19. Amy Kirschke, *Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 1995), 15.

beauty of art is that which expresses truth. Du Bois opines, “The apostle of beauty thus becomes the apostle of Truth and Right not by choice but by inner and outer compulsion. Free he is but his freedom is ever bounded by Truth and Justice; and slavery only dogs him when he is denied the right to tell the Truth and recognize the ideal of Justice.”²⁰ Indeed, Du Bois expresses his views as America’s fascination with blues and jazz music was on a trajectory and helping to fuel the popularity among white American consumers of the period’s other arts. However, literary critic Houston Baker Jr. thought the Harlem Renaissance was more of a figment of white patrons’ imaginations. He theorized that the optimism expressed by the artists is contrary to the reality of oppression. The author wrote in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, “It is difficult to conceive of the horribleness of the American scene for black people during the era in which Locke produced his classic collection *The New Negro*.”²¹

Nathan Irvin Huggins extensively explores the validity of the period’s art in *The Harlem Renaissance*. Along with exploring other cultural indicators, Huggins examines in detail the geographical area’s emergence as a location for the period’s political, philosophical and artistic activity. The researcher takes the affirmative position regarding the uniqueness of the period’s arts and edited a compilation of literary and visual works titled *Voices From The Harlem Renaissance*. This publication unabashedly explores the validity and quality of the era’s art. The author includes the “art or propaganda” debate, which is the gist of the criticisms by the period’s naysayers and proponents. Similarly, in

20. W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Criteria of Negro Art,” *Crisis Magazine* (October, 1926): 10-11.

21. Houston Baker Jr. *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 33.

The Harlem Renaissance as Postcolonial Phenomenon, researcher Robert Phillipson theorizes that the artistic movement developed a “postcolonial discourse in three ways. (1) it provided a publishing platform for writing about life in territories under imperial rule; (2) it extended postcolonial modes of thought and resistance into an American intellectual and political context; and (3) it provided a model and inspiration for subsequent ideologies.”²² Though Phillipson’s thoughts here are in the context of literary arts, one can readily place the popularity Armstrong’s ability to transform literature into music in the blues genre that is model for postcolonial aesthetics and subsequently resistance.

Houston Baker Jr.’s concerns regarding the validity of the period came from a fear that there was an unbalanced influence from well-meaning but misguided financial supporters and theorized that it is a mistake to label the era a rebirth of black art. According to Baker Jr., the canon of works became manifestations of what outsiders believed to be black life.²³ Baker’s fears are evident when one explores the ramifications following the publication of Carl Van Vechten’s novel, *Nigger Heaven*. Van Vechten was a caucasian philanthropist, supporter, cultural critic for the New York Times and promoter of the arts. By 1926, the year of his publication, he had become a mainstay in Harlem. Van Vechten’s parties were legendary not only regarding their grandeur, but the diverse guests, including black and white artists, politicians, philanthropists, and activists. It was not unusual to see the likes of Broadway stars like Tallulah Bankhead, *Tin Pan*

22. Robert Phillipson, “The Harlem Renaissance as Postcolonial Phenomenon,” *African American Review* 40, no. 1 (Spring, 2006): 145.

23. See Houston Baker Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, xv-xvi.

Alley composer George Gershwin, actor/activist/singer Paul Robeson, and Bessie Smith, among the attendees. Schuyler comments, “Through the intermediary activities of Carl Van Vechten and others, downtown was ‘discovering’ Negro Harlem and vice versa.”²⁴ Harlem Renaissance researcher David Levering Lewis surmises in *When Harlem Was In Vogue* that, “Nigger Heaven stirred the public because it was the first fictional treatment of Harlem by a white, and thus the pioneering novel about the condition (high and low) of the urban Afro-American.”²⁵ Additionally, Van Vechten was also a prolific photographer and contributed many images of Harlem’s black elite.

Van Vechten's use of the derogatory term in the title inspired the consternation many of the era's leading figures. Some questioned whether or not someone outside of the culture can accurately capture the complexities of black life in Harlem. Lewis noted the reactions of two leading African-American figures, James Weldon Johnson and W.E.B. Du Bois. Johnson was “almost giddy with delight” with the publication while DuBois thought it was an affront to the talented tenth.²⁶ Robert C. Hart, in *Black and White Relations in The Harlem Renaissance* agrees with Lewis’s assessment: “He (Du Bois) felt that white artists were concerned first of all to please a white audience and that this audience would not hear the truth about black people, but must have its stereotypes

24. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George Schuyler*, 158.

25. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 182.

26. *Ibid.*, 182-3.

confirmed.”²⁷ Hart was speculating about Van Vechten’s thought processes while writing *Nigger Heaven*.

One of the more widely read publications on the period is the aforementioned *When Harlem Was In Vogue* by David Levering Lewis. It is a narrative chronologically discussing the period’s figures, their goals, problems, artworks, successes, and failures. Lewis’s discussion includes venues, artistic choices, publications, logistics, the social interactions of the stakeholders, as well as political commentary. He surveys the period’s ontology through political, aesthetic, historical, and social perspectives. His research includes the geographical region’s progression from a largely underpopulated northern Manhattan suburb in the first two decades of the twentieth century (particularly the years before and including World War I), to a predominantly African-American community economically flourishing during the 1920s. Lewis also documents the interaction between artists and their influence on political thought. He also gives the reader a glimpse of the atmosphere in the venues that often served as conduits to the production of the period’s art. Pertinent to this research is Lewis’s insight into the interactions, and interrelationships between the major figures, which dispels a common theme among Harlem Renaissance naysayers and revisionists who argue that there was little if any interaction and cross-influences between political figures and artists, particularly beyond genres where the latter is concerned. Lewis also discusses blues and jazz music’s impact on the culture. For example, he details the genre’s divisive impact on the community’s aesthetics, particularly whether or not it is good representations of black art. According to

27. Robert C. Hart, “Black-White Literary Relations in the Harlem Renaissance,” *American Literature* 44, no. 4 (Jan. 1973): 613.

Lewis, “Afro-American music had always been a source of embarrassment to the Afro-American elite.”²⁸ He continues, “The group continued to be a little more than annoyed by the singing of spirituals long after James Weldon Johnson and Alain Locke had proclaimed them America’s most precious, beautiful, and original musical expression.”²⁹

Lewis is also a prolific W.E.B. Du Bois Scholar. His biography *W.E.B. Du Bois: 1919-1963* is the second of dual publication detailing Du Bois’s life and philosophy regarding race, Pan-Africanism, and black art. Lewis also describes Du Bois’s distrust of the dependency of black artists on white patronage, a dependency that decades later fueled Baker’s concerns. Du Bois believed that the desire to please white patrons might compromise the honesty and purity of black art.³⁰ Lewis also details Du Bois’s philosophy regarding black art as a tool to agitate for exposure of the social injustices in America. Du Bois’s Pan-African Conferences in Europe sought to establish a new world order, post-World War I. Indeed, his activism in the Pan-African movement directly influenced the commencement of the cessation of colonial rule on the continent. Du Bois and the conference became essential conduits for freedom despite the bastions of colonial rule entrenched in the Congo, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Du Bois expresses his view of the period researched here and eloquently expresses his concerns for the social, artistic and political progress as well as the quest for human rights of all peoples in his final autobiography *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life*

28. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 173.

29. *Ibid.*, 173.

30. David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. DuBois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Holt and Company, 2000), 181.

from the Last Decade of the First Century is his written just before his death.³¹ Arguably the era's most important philosophical figure, Du Bois discusses in detail his challenges, ideals, goals, and accomplishments. He admits to failures, personal conflicts, reservations about the growth and ethics of the organization he helped found, the NAACP, his legal troubles with the American government, and finally his choosing to live the remainder of his life in Ghana.

Claude McKay joins Langston Hughes and gives the reader the insider's perspectives of the artist. The poet was considered by many to be one of the few literary artists to rival Langston Hughes. In an excerpt (*A Long Way from Home*) from his autobiography the West Indian poet juxtaposes meeting artists, philosophical and political figures with his frustrations with the Harlem elitist. Specifically, McKay describes meeting Du Bois: "Yet meeting Du Bois was something of a personal disappointment. He seemed possessed of a cold, acid hauteur of spirit, which is not lessened even he vouchsafes a smile."³² His inspiration for relocating to Paris was his inability to fit in. McKay's problems give the reader a first-hand account of the failures associated with artists whose creations are either marginalized by an elitist attitude or considered too radical. McKay's poems *Home to Harlem* and *White Houses* received were critical acclaim. Such was not the case with many of the period's leading black figures. McKay describes the frustration as such, "But the resentment of the Negro intelligentsia against *Home To Harlem* was so general, bitter and violent that I was

31. The first two autobiographies were, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, published in 1921, and *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*, published in 1940.

32. Claude McKay, "The Harlem Intelligentsia," *A Long Way from Home* (New York: Lee Furman, 1937), 90.

hesitant about returning to the great Black Belt.”³³ McKay’s concerns were confirmed when Alain Locke (who thought McKay’s *White House* contained rhetoric too inflammatory at a time when the period’s art was seeking acceptance into the mainstream literary art world) without permission changed the title to *White Houses* before publication. Consequently, McKay thought that the most influential among the African-American elite were uncomfortable with art that represented social realism which in his eyes affirmed appeasement to preconceived notions by some white patrons and critics. Schuyler, Du Bois, Hughes, and Locke were a part of the continuum that dominated the debate regarding the purpose, quality, and validity of the period’s art.

The popularity of American music particularly blues and jazz impacted the debate. Indeed, the ascension of the two performing arts’ popularity was evident in the pros and cons of the debate. Lewis explores the impact of the music on the social scene, particularly Fletcher Henderson’s presentation of his newly created “big band” jazz ensemble. Lewis surmises, “On the memorable night of the Savoy’s opening and in many nights to follow, Fletcher Henderson’s Rainbow Orchestra symbolized purely and simply the debut of jazz as a product for national consumption.”³⁴ Henderson’s performing art with Armstrong as one of the featured performers, was dependent upon the improvisational possibilities while playing blues music. Consequently, music that came from an outgrowth of Southern Black-American folk traditions was on display in Harlem venues varying from the lavish parties given by the elite, to rent parties and post-

33. Claude McKay, “The New Negro in Paris” *A Long Way Home* (The Archives of Claude McKay), 235.

34. *Ibid.*, 173.

midnight jam sessions that were fixtures during the period. Ironically, one of the chief critics of the music, George Schuyler boasted of consuming music on many nights at night clubs and parties.³⁵ The music described in such publications as Rudolph Fisher's *The Caucasian Storms Harlem* was rapidly becoming not only the most popular performing art in the region but the nation. Du Bois was aware of the music's impact and popularity and chose to embrace the possibilities of its power as a tool for propaganda. Hughes was so impressed by the cultural behaviors associated with the performance art that he wrote several poems with the blues either as a protagonist or the inspiration to the protagonist.

Despite the popularity of blues music and the recognition that its origins were born out of the spirituals and field hollers created generations earlier, some African-American leaders thought the music and the cultural behaviors (frequenting rent parties, supporting brothels, and visiting speakeasies) associated with it should be avoided or eliminated. Samuel Floyd Jr. discusses that attitude in the context of an early twentieth-century modernist view: "This *demythicalizing* of black culture, together with the increasing separation of blacks from rural America, resulted in new tensions for African-Americans who were seeking new roots and comforts."³⁶ Schuyler expressed his belief that upward mobility during the first three decades of the twentieth century meant disdaining blues music and the cultural behaviors associated with it.³⁷ Harlem Renaissance performing artists were aware of the schism. Period performing artists such

35. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George Schuyler*, 125.

36. Samuel Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 89.

37. Schuyler, *Our Greatest Gifts to America*, 192.

as Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington musically co-opted the condescending attitudes and sarcastically wrote *Dicty Blues* (1923) and *Dicty Glide* (1929) respectively. Consequently, the continuum helped to inspire the debate regarding the purpose of black art, but in some cases blurred the lines. Floyd Jr. believes that the “economic, social, and artistic success could be obtained only on the basis of skills marketable in the urban setting, through artificial values of materialism, and through forms of creativity that were acceptable to white society.”³⁸ Simultaneously, Du Bois continued to press for the usage of black arts as propaganda tools, contrary to Locke’s belief that such advocacy is indeed admittance to inferior creation.

Two of the genre's seminal performing artists embraced the challenges and advantages of owning authorship, publishing, and productions of blues music. William Christopher Handy, the “Father of the Blues,” was one of the earliest to notate the music into publishable notation when he wrote *Memphis Blues* in 1912. He discusses the genre’s popularity as well as his mission in a 1940 article titled *The Heart of the Blues*. “My purpose was to capture in fixed form the highly distinct music of my race. Everything I have written has its roots deep in the folk life of the South.”³⁹ Subsequently, Handy and Harry Pace formed the *Pace & Handy Music Company*. The company moved to New York in 1918 and their success as the first black-owned and operated recording and publishing company, as well as one of the period’s leading progenitors of the music, is a testament to not only a strong business sense but the genre’s

38. Floyd Jr., 89.

39. William Christopher Handy “The Heart of the Blues,” *Etude Music Magazine*, March 1940, 152, 193-94.

popularity.⁴⁰ Indeed one of the central figures and chief progenitors of the genre's popularity between 1923 and 1930 is Louis Armstrong.

Armstrong's meteoric career (specifically during the period considered here) inspired a shift in the music's emphasis from an ensemble-focused music to an improvisational art. His creativity as a soloist in a leader and accompanist setting made him one of the period's leading blues artists. While in Chicago, and before locating to Harlem, the significance of Armstrong's talents was evident in his career when he successfully served as a sideman in Joe "King" Oliver's band. Specifically, he showed a mastery of improvising blues music when on Oliver's recording of *Chimes Blues* in 1923. His stint in the Fletcher Henderson Band served to influence the leader's compositions as well as chief arranger Don Redman's musical arrangements, specifically those that were blues oriented. *Sugarfoot Stomp* is an example this compositional style as a leader, Armstrong's choices in blues recordings were shifting the paradigm both instrumentally and vocally, and in 1928, Armstrong's seminal recording of the Oliver composition, *West End Blues* became one of the outstanding contributions to American music. Interestingly the third decade of the twentieth century ended with the infamous stock market crash and Armstrong recording *Blue Yoddlle No. 9*, with country music icon, Jimmie Rodgers, a testament to the music's popularity.⁴¹

Armstrong's musicianship inspired new approaches to making instrumental and vocal blues music. Not unlike many artists, his abilities are manifestations of social and

40. See Eileen Southern's discussion of Handy and Pace's impact on the period in *The Music of Black Americans* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1997), 370-71.

41. In 1930, Armstrong and Rodgers went to Los Angeles and collaborated on Rodger's *Blue Yoddlle No. 9*.

cultural factors from his childhood and adolescent years in New Orleans and there are numerous publications on New Orleans history and culture as the focal points of the narrative. A vast majority include historical research regarding the region's enslaved population and their cultural behaviors in Congo Square. Louis Armstrong's artistic choices were born out of a cultural awareness gained while coming of age in New Orleans and his intuitiveness developed from a keen sense of the cultural behaviors inspired by a unique way of making music.⁴²

The first generation post-Civil War jazz musicians he heard as a child musically reproduced (on European instruments) the same practices their enslaved fore parents did in Congo Square. Author Ned Sublette researched the origins of the earliest enslaved Africans brought to Louisiana in *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*. This publication is a historical perspective of the city's late colonial and early antebellum era. Significant to the research subject considered here, Sublette wrote in detail regarding the impact of origin of the region's earliest enslaved population (Senegambia) and discussed the obvious musical influence they had on the region, particularly Congo Square. According to Sublette, "One would suppose that the music of Africans in Louisiana during the French period bore a strong resemblance to Senegambia, the home land of the majority of the people."⁴³ The pedagogy and proclivities of the African slave trade, particularly the process of enslaving natives of Senegambia during the eighteenth century are explored in Daniel Mannix and David

42. Thomas Brothers' *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: Norton & Company, 2006), 98-218 is an excellent discussion of his childhood and adolescent years.

43. Ned Sublette, *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009), 60.

Cowley's *Black Cargoes*. The publication details the intricate interactions between Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, French, and the complicity of West African officials. Henry Kmen's *Music In New Orleans* describes the evolvement of the city's culture including the impact from the infusion of multiple nationalities.⁴⁴ Kmen surveys the region's politics, social, and art proclivities. Kmen outlines not only cultural behaviors (funeral rituals, vice, Mardis Gras, Catholicism, etc.) but also the subsequent impact upon artistic choices among the city's African-American musicians, resulting in the creation of jazz music.

The vestiges of one of America's first art forms, jazz music, can be traced to cultural behaviors by the region's enslaved Africans at a weekly place of gathering called Congo Square. Significant to this writer's theory that Armstrong's approach to music making was handed down from the enslaved in the region is the fact that Kmen made a note of traveler and architect Benjamin Latrobe's accounts of the performing art he heard in Congo Square. Latrobe shares what he observed during one of his many visits to the culturally significant real estate: "They made an incredible noise. The most curious instrument, however, was a stringed instrument which was in no doubt imported from Africa."⁴⁵ Kmen also traces the city's penchant for juxtaposing a tolerance for vice (gambling and prostitution) with a religious fervor that was both embracing of Catholicism and the cultural practices of the black Baptist church while being the only place in the United States that housed three opera companies. Donald Marquis's *In*

44. Henry Kmen, *Music in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), vii, viii.

45. Latrobe, *Journal of Latrobe*, 1905, 179-81.

Search Of Buddy Bolden is an excellent resource when researching the infancy of jazz music and its blues roots. Marquis details the life of one of the genre's earliest progenitors and inspiration to Louis Armstrong, Charles "Buddy" Bolden. His research includes the cultural behaviors manifested in the musical practices of the enslaved in Congo Square. They also include a communal approach to making music present in the practice of non-musicians participating in parades by following their favorite band, usually led by Bolden.

One of Armstrong's 1924 collaborators on the seminal recording, *Texas Moaner Blues* discussed in Chapter I, was Sidney Bechet. His autobiography titled *Treat It Gentle*, gives the reader an insider's perspective of the early years of jazz in New Orleans.⁴⁶ Bechet affirms the West African cultural behaviors of enslaved musicians in Congo Square in the chapter devoted to his grandfather. He discusses his grandfather Omar's inspiration: "It's all true that was said about my grandfather. And it's all so mixed up with the music. My grandfather, he was Africa."⁴⁷ Bechet details Omar's plot and execution of an attempt to freedom. Similarly, in *There Is A River*, Vincent Harding describes the outcome when those who similar to Omar, decide to seek freedom: "Inevitably, every black man and woman who began to think about freedom—every decision to protest, to resist, to break the chains of fear and doubt; every final tearful parting; every passage in the darkness of the future—presented a challenge to the system

46. See Sidney Bechet's discussion of his grandfather, Omar in his autobiography *Treat It Gentle* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 6-44.

47. Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 79.

which sought to create slaves.”⁴⁸ *Treat It Gentle* is also a primary source with regards to the music and culture leading up to and the early years of jazz music, especially the importance of the blues to the genre. Bechet’s autobiography keenly describes the cultural indicators that inspired him and Armstrong’s performing art.

Several researchers chose to write biographies of Louis Armstrong. *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong* by Terry Teachout is pertinent to this writer’s theory regarding the artist’s influence on the Harlem Renaissance. Teachout’s extensive research into Armstrong’s childhood and adolescent years reinforces previous historical data regarding New Orleans’ unique culture and behaviors. He discusses in detail the impact of Armstrong’s contemporaries on the development of early jazz. Significantly, Teachout expounds on Armstrong’s memoir, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans* and other historical data; Teachout also chronicles Armstrong’s early run-ins with the law, subsequent detainment, and early training as a musician. He details Armstrong’s artistic development from 1919 to 1930 including the artist’s relocation to Chicago at the behest of his New Orleans mentor, Joe “King” Oliver. Indeed, Teachout’s discussion regarding Armstrong’s Chicago years with “King” Oliver’s Original Creole Jazz Band is invaluable to this research. The jazz pioneer’s residence in Chicago was intermittent with stints in New York with Fletcher Henderson and his own Hot Five and Hot Seven Bands. However, his performances with Henderson were an extension of a musical apprenticeship that began in New Orleans under Oliver.⁴⁹ One cannot overstate the importance of Chicago in the

48. Harding, *There Is A River*, 106.

49. Henderson and Don Redman’s composition, *Sugarfoot Stomp* is an excellent example of a composition with Armstrong’s traditional New Orleans polyphonic approach.

growth of blues music's popularity in America.⁵⁰ Jazz as an improvisational art was on full display as Armstrong and Oliver duplicated with ever increasing skills the New Orleans craft of making music, an art that evolved from the enslaved in Congo Square.

In summary, the pertinent literature discussed here serves as a vehicle to show the interrelatedness of the arts, artists, and major political and philosophical figures during the period considered here. This researcher used comparative and textual analysis to show the influence(s) of Southern black folk music on the period's performing arts and subsequent contribution to the philosophical debate as to the purpose and quality of the arts.

50. See Armstrong's discussion regarding his relationship with Joe "King" Oliver in his autobiography, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1954), 98-9.

CHAPTER III

AGITATE OR CREATE: LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND THE ARTISTIC,
PHILOSOPHICAL, AND POLITICAL DEBATE DURING THE
HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Between 1923 and 1930, there was a flurry of cultural activity primarily in an uptown neighborhood (north of Manhattan) called Harlem, New York. Artists (literary, performing, and visual) began to flock there to take advantage of a growing freedom to create instinctively and market their creations. The region attracted a variety of African-American social and political organizations inspired by a spirit of activism. They included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The Urban League, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. In separate camps, the groups argued for the enactment of anti-lynching laws, enforcement of constitutional guaranteed civil rights, fair housing, and a mass migration to the continent of Africa. Indeed the assemblage of so many artists and political groups was not a serendipitous event. The area attracted Black American literary, visual, and performing artists because of an atmosphere that encouraged and rewarded creativity and artistic expression. To this end, the cultural movement known as the Harlem Renaissance produced seminal literary, visual, and performing works of art. However, one of the period's critics, George Schuyler questioned the quality and quantity of art produced during the Harlem

Renaissance. W.E.B. Du Bois and others argued that artists should use their creations as propaganda tools, exposing the nation's poor record on race relations. Conversely, Alain Locke cautioned against creating art that did not meet euro-centric standards.

This chapter examines the debate through a textual analysis of W.E.B. Du Bois's 1926 NAACP Convention speech, *The Criteria of Negro Art*, George Schuyler's essay, *The Negro Art-Hokum*, Alain Locke's *The Legacy of Ancestral Arts*, and Langston Hughes's essay, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*. This discussion will also examine the specifics of the debate from a performing artist's perspective in the context of Armstrong's body of work during the period. Specifically, this writer will discuss the following Armstrong recordings, *Texas Moaner Blues* (1924), *Black and Blue* (1926), and *West End Blues* (1928). The latter will be juxtaposed with Hughes's essay above. This writer's theory is that though Armstrong's influence on the period's visual and literary artists may have been on the periphery; his performing art so changed America's nationalistic music idioms (blues and jazz music) that his contribution to the debate (though not verbally expressed) was seminal. Indeed Armstrong's popularity was paralleled with the artistic and political activity during the period considered here. He reached an artistic pinnacle through many blues and jazz recordings while his reputation as a seasoned performer and his improvisational skills grew.¹ The latter grew from performing experiences in an American music genre (traditional New Orleans jazz) that emphasized the importance of an ensemble. Armstrong's role in changing the art's focus

1. This conclusion is obviously subjective. However, Armstrong's body of work between 1923 and 1930 is a display of existential artistic choices (*Chimes Blues-Blue Yoddlle No. 9*), including more than one hundred fifty recordings, and influence on the improvisational choices of future jazz and blues musicians.

from the relative importance of a cumulative production to an emphasis on individual improvisational choices, especially in a blues music context, is salient.² In the context of African and African-American historical relevance, Armstrong's role as a conduit artist and a cultural agent of change is apparent in his body of work which spanned approximately forty years following the Harlem Renaissance until his death in 1970.

The years considered here, 1923-1930, proved to be one of the most important eras in the history of African-American culture. The resulting cultural movement (though relatively short in duration) produced a plethora of seminal literary, visual, and performing arts. The fervor of Nationalism (partly inspired by the post-World War I political changes) and the *New Negro* philosophy partly served as the impetus for the cultural explosion. It also ignited a debate as to the best paths to gain equal access to the constitutional guarantees which heretofore was out of reach even for black Americans and women. In separate camps, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Ida Barnett Wells, and George Schuyler, all published literature that expressed their multi-lithic experiences, concerns, and solutions. The subsequent discussion evolved into a philosophical debate as to the role of black arts.³ Many critics questioned the quality and quantity of art produced during the Harlem Renaissance. Supporters of the period's arts wondered who controls and determines the worth of a body of artistic works. Should black artists follow their instincts and solely create social realist art exposing the social ills and cultural

2. The consideration here is in the context of Armstrong's artistic experiences with the Joe "King" Oliver Creole Band, The Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, and his own Hot Five and Hot Seven Orchestras.

3. In addition to the aforementioned publications by Du Bois, and Schuyler, see Marcus Garvey's essay "Africa for Africans," *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 17 and Ida B. Wells' autobiography, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida Barnett Wells* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 331-33.

behaviors inherent in the African-American experience, consequently agitating for change? Or should they seek acceptance from Eurocentric critics and avoid creations based solely upon racial themes? The artists were not immune to historians Carter G. Woodson's and Arturo Schomburg's research publications which inspired an increased awareness of African and African-American historical contributions to the world. Subsequently, many African-American artists began to look to Africa for inspiration.⁴ Harlem Renaissance literary artists, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Zora Neal Hurston captured the political, social desires, romantic problems, and faiths of their people. Performing artists Louis Armstrong, Edward "Duke Ellington, and Thomas Wright "Fats" Waller composed, recorded and played music with racial themes. Similarly, visual artists Aaron Douglas, Romare Bearden, Richmond Barthe' and Romare Bearden captured aspects of African-American life in various mediums. Not unlike other historical periods, their art was subject to critical review, and some of the era's leading figures weighed in.

Historically, artists have grappled with the purpose of their art for as long as the practice has been considered human phenomena.⁵ Should their art (literary, performance, or visual) be produced for the purpose of satisfying an aesthetic or should it expose social conditions and or advocate a political position? Period literary artist James Weldon

4. Woodson's publication *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1933), 122-126 and Schomburg's "The Negro Digs Up His Past," *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 231 are seminal treatises on the methodology used to deliberately eliminate the dissemination of the historical contributions Africa and the West Indies respectively.

5. Western art-music composers such as J.S. Bach and George Handel are salient examples of performing artists grappling with the purpose of their arts. Specifically, should it adhere to the sacred standards or secular demands.

Johnson places the purpose of an artistic body of work in a historical context. “The final measure of the greatness of all peoples is the amount and standard of the literature and art they have produced.”⁶ Cultural critics and historians with the benefit of hindsight often place works of art in either or both categories. In his landmark research, *How Musical Is Man*, ethnomusicologist John Blacking explains, “What turns one man off may turn another man on, not because of any absolute quality in the music itself but because of what the music has come to mean to him as a member of a particular culture or social group.”⁷ For example, the performance and improvisational art of soprano saxophonist and clarinetist, Sidney Bechet became even more significant after the explorations of jazz artists Charlie Parker and John Coltrane who contributed to the genre decades later. Armstrong’s performing art is not only seminal in the context of the Harlem Renaissance, but it is also salient to the art form as it evolved during the rest of the twentieth century.

Critics chose to marginalize African-American artistic creations as they habitually viewed the art in the context of nineteenth-century minstrelsy. However, when blues music is placed in that context, the exportation of the art to northern urban areas allowed for an appropriation of folk caricatures into a lucrative business endeavor called *Tin Pan Alley* music.⁸ Significantly, while Black American folk music and *Tin Pan Alley* recreations were saturating the market, the debate regarding art’s purpose reached a

6. James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, First Edition (New York: Harcourt and Brace Co., 1922), vii.

7. John Blacking, *How Musical Is Man?* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1973), 33.

8. *Tin Pan Alley* is the label given to the canon of songs marketed to blues and jazz music consumers. The songs were written by primarily by white American composers during the period considered here. George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* is an example of writers and composers that are outside of the culture, but consider themselves familiar enough with black life to produce works of art based on the African-American culture.

relative zenith during the third decade of the twentieth century and the crux of the debate was the role and or purpose of the era's art. Two major Harlem Renaissance figures were at the center of the discussion and consequent schism. Social scientist and philosopher W.E.B Du Bois and cultural critic Alain Locke framed the disagreement. Du Bois thought that African-American artists should use their mediums as propaganda tools to better the race.⁹ Writer and critic Alain Locke, on the other hand, felt that artists needed to create a body of work motivated by the "art for art's sake" mantra.¹⁰ He believed it was necessary for black artists to aspire and reach critical acceptance of their white counterparts and critics.

The dilemma black visual, literary and performing artists faced, was whether or not to continue to depict African American life in its varied and multidimensional references and risk critical acceptance based upon a Eurocentric barometer. Du Bois was sure that just as Paul Lawrence Dunbar did a decade earlier, black writers should use their mediums in whatever contextual vernacular to tell of their people's life truthfully in America.¹¹ In the same context, Du Bois also took into consideration the importance African-American music regarding America's contribution to the world. According to Du Bois, "And so by fateful chance the Negro folk song---the rhythmic cry of the slave---stands today not simply as the sole American music but the most beautiful expression of

9. See Du Bois's speech to the 1926 NAACP Convention, titled "The Criteria of Negro Art," *Crisis Magazine* (October 1926): 10-11.

10. "Art for art's sake" is a euphemism often used to describe art created with western or European barometers and no political or social agenda.

11. See Du Bois's speech, *The Criteria of Negro Art*.

human spirit born this side the seas.”¹² He was also concerned with the extent to which white benefactors were influencing artistic decisions. Implicit in Du Bois’s concerns was the question as to who decides what qualifies as African-American art was pervasive. Du Bois recognized that critics of the period’s art ignored the fact that similar to other cultures, the artistic creations of a group rise from self-conscious, aggrandizing, and scholarly efforts. To this end, he understood that there is a risk of losing artistic autonomy anger when artists seek to win approval from those who have a monopoly on the definition of scholarship, art, and culture. Du Bois biographer David Levering Lewis comments, “But white capital and influence was crucial, and white presence, at least in the early years, hovered over the New Negro world of art and literature like a benevolent censor, politely but pervasively setting the outer limits of its creative boundaries.”¹³ Thus the dilemma for black artists was evident. To what degree should well-meaning white benefactors influence their art?

The charitable interest in black artists came primarily from supporters in two camps. One group was fascinated with African-American life from a cultural primitivism perspective. According to Lewis, some were seeking to satisfy a “need for personal nourishment and to confirm their vision of cultural salvation coming from margins of the civilization.”¹⁴ Still, others were inspired to explore perceived sexual themes in the context of Sigmund Freud’s theories (published during the second decade of the twentieth century) of sexual repression. According to evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey Miller,

12. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005), 251.

13. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 98.

14. *Ibid.*, 99.

Freud believed that “human artistic display results from a sublimation of excess sexual energy.”¹⁵ The white consumers saw black American cultural behaviors, particularly those associated with music in Harlem, as an outgrowth the “noble savage” phenomenon.¹⁶ In this context, outsiders believe the lack of assimilation into American culture allows for a degree of promiscuity, or at the very least, an insinuation of sexual freedom. Many of the same outsiders, particularly white consumers, were willing to partake in the sexually tinged mores and folkways apparent in African-American performing art on display nightly in Harlem. They labeled it “jungle music.”¹⁷

The opposing view to Du Bois’s theories came from fellow Harvard alum, cultural critic, and author of the publication *The New Negro*, Alain Locke. Coincidentally, Locke was responsible for many of the introductions of period literary and visual artists to willing benefactors. Locke suggests that if artists solely use areas of black life and experiences as the single theme for their art, they would affirm the critics’ argument that their body of work lacks artistic worth, is monotonous and sub-par. Locke’s position is Manichean. While he urges black visual artists not to create solely on racial themes, they should (just as European artists Matisse and Picasso) look to the centuries-old artistic practices of West Africa.¹⁸ Specifically, Locke acknowledges the contributions of the

15. Geoffrey Miller, *The Mating Mind* (New York, Anchor Books, 2001) 50.

16. “Noble savage” is a term used by sociologists and anthropologists to describe behaviors generally present in non-western groups that would otherwise be considered outside of the norm or ill-advised in a Euro-centric setting, but a part of the more or folkway of the group being considered.

17. See Rudolph Fisher’s “The Caucasian Storms Harlem,” *American Mercury* (August, 1927): 393.

18. See Alain Locke’s essay, “The Legacy of Ancestral Arts,” *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1925), 254-67.

region's ancient visual art practices to early twentieth-century western culture and by endorsing Matisse's and Picasso's West African-inspired creations. On the other hand, he believes that African-American visual art was lacking diversity even when its creators express indebtedness to West African practices. Locke opines,

The characteristic African art expressions are rigid, controlled, disciplined, abstract, heavily conventionalized; those of the Aframerican,--free, exuberant, emotional, sentimental and human. Only by misinterpretation of the African spirit, can one claim any emotional kinship between them—for the spirit of African expression, by and large, is disciplined, sophisticated, laconic and fatalistic. The emotional temper of the American Negro is exactly the opposite.¹⁹

Contrary to Du Bois, Locke believes that Harlem Renaissance visual artists should adopt the European model of development, and he bemoans the body of non-European Western art. “While American art including the work of our own Negro artists, has produced nothing above the level of the genre study or more penetrating than a Nordicized transcription, European art has gone on experimenting until the technique of the Negro subject has reached the dignity and skill of virtuoso treatment and a distinctive style.”

Locke explains,

The work of these European artists should even now be inspiration and guide posts of a younger school of American Negro artists. They have too long been victims of the academy tradition and shared the conventional blindness of the Caucasian eye with respect to the racial material at their immediate disposal. Thus there have been notably successful Negro artists, but no development of a school of Negro art.²⁰

Indeed Du Bois and Locke framed the disagreement. With regards to art or propaganda, Locke says that, “My chief objection to propaganda, apart from its besetting sin of monotony and disproportion, is that it perpetuates the position of group inferiority even in

19. Locke, “Art or Propaganda,” *Harlem* (November 1928): 256.

20. Ibid.

crying out against it. For it leaves and speaks under the shadow of a dominant majority whom it harangues, cajoles, threatens, or supplicates.”²¹ Subsequently, the dilemma black visual, literary and performing artists faced, was to use their art to agitate or follow creative instincts that may lead to non-racial or generic themes.

Some of the period’s visual artists acquiesced to the Du Bois school of thought and produced works that were in the social realism mode. For example, Aaron Douglas, Romare Bearden, and Archibald Motley produced works in various mediums that depicted black life in Harlem. According to Aaron Douglas biographer, Amy Kirsche, Harlem’s black leaders were aware of the cultural atmosphere. Kirsche opines, “Harlem’s new intellectual class self-consciously believed that they were witnessing a renaissance, or rebirth, of African-American culture. Poetry, prose, the visual arts, theater, dance, and music were all integral to their vision of rebirth.”²² Indeed, Harlem Renaissance institutions were forced to choose whether or not to accept African-American art (literary, visual, and performance) as indicators of progress and proof of a humanity deserving of America’s constitutional promises or contrary to Kirsche’s opinion, reject the arts as detrimental frivolity.

Some cultural critics and historians questioned the legitimacy of the period’s art. They believed the period was more a product of some philanthropists’ fantasies than an accurate account of the cultural era.²³ One must view the creative choices expressed by

21. Locke, “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts,” 256.

22. Amy Helene Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 33.

23. David Levering Lewis discusses the continuum in detail in *When Harlem Was in Vogue*.

the artists in the context of the reality of oppression. According to Houston Baker Jr., it was, “difficult to conceive of the horribleness of the American scene for black people during the era that Locke produced his classic collection, (‘The New Negro’).”²⁴ Indeed, regarding their livelihood, most of the artists depended on charitable gifts. To Baker’s point, Locke suggests that solely using aspects of African-American life and experiences, affirms to critics of the period’s arts that there is a lack of artistic talent, and such a body of work would be monotonous as well as sub-par. Du Bois, on the other hand, was concerned with the enormity and consistency of many white patrons’ generosity, particularly the possibility of ulterior motives. According to biographer David Levering Lewis, Du Bois had stopped just short of seeing a white conspiracy behind the Renaissance, but he underscored the obvious truth, that there was “a surprising number of white people who are getting great satisfaction out of these younger Negro writers. Because they think it is going to stop the Negro question.”²⁵ Du Bois’s position on the matter was clear. He welcomed philanthropic capital, even sought it for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, but cautioned artists to maintain artistic autonomy and advocate for racial equality.

When black American performing art is placed in the context of Locke’s admonitions, Locke’s desire to find an art that the dominant culture would embrace is

24. Houston A. Baker Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, 76.

25. David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. DuBois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2000), 181.

satisfied.²⁶ Blues and jazz music, (already more than three decades old) was becoming two of America's most popular musical idioms. By 1925, blues music had become a permanent fixture in American culture with many of its salient progenitors such as Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong (periodically) living in the Harlem community. Consumers purchased their recordings by the thousands and their live performances were consistently sold out. Both are indicative of the performing art's popularity among black and white citizens. Blues music also functioned as a liberating aesthetic for black Americans. Its creators musically acknowledged particular aspects of life (failed romance, racial oppression, the death of a loved one, or their own mortality) which caused emotional pain.²⁷ To this end, the first step to liberation from life's troubling nuances is to recognize and acknowledge their source(s). Indeed, it is not a mere coincidence that some of the period's more well-known literary artists such as Claude McKay, Sterling Brown, and Langston Hughes (whom Locke considered indicative of the *New Negro*) readily wrote literary works with blues music as its subject. Harlem Renaissance theorist and historian Nathan Irving Huggins noted the genre's impact upon Hughes. Huggins explains, "Langston Hughes conceived of poetry as the music of the common people's language, captured and tied to the images their minds."²⁸ Hughes

26. The evidence referred to here is the plethora of recording companies that either created a market wing called "race records" such as *Columbia*, *Okeh*, *Vocallion*, *Blue Bird*, or companies that were created specifically to explore the blues music genre such as *Black Swan Records*.

27. The reader is encouraged to investigate the lyrics or texts of a cross-section of early blues songs. W. C. Handy's *St. Louis Blues* referred to in Chapter IV is a great example of early blues music.

28. Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 78.

surmises, “Many of his early poems were efforts to touch the dignity of the common man’s life.”²⁹ Lewis describes McKay’s and Toomer’s dilemma,

In their contempt for propagandist literature and disdain for literary politics, and their dogged struggles simply to be themselves, they tested the outermost limits of what was possible for people of African ancestry dedicated to the creative life. Still---for paradox was the essence of their being---an objective survey reveals that McKay played literary politics shamelessly and Toomer became a rigid propagandist.³⁰

Hughes, McKay, and Toomer’s literary choices serve as seminal examples of the period’s canon. Each faced the dilemma of determining their artistic dissimilarly, but they collectively embraced the performing arts’ impact on the period.

Langston Hughes believed that the African-American artist should remain faithful to his or her passions particularly when they are expressing the experiences of their race. In 1926, Langston Hughes argued this point in an essay titled *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*. Regardless of audience or patron demands, black artists should adhere to their creative instincts, particularly when expressing social injustices. Hughes wrote of the difficult decision black artists must make with regards to their creative impulses as well as the consequences of those choices. If the Euro-centric model adopted by academia is the standard of the arts, then African-American artists are often forced to choose whether or not to reflect themselves and their culture with depictions or texts that are contrary to American ideals. Conversely, they may be compelled to disregard the African-American experience (to satisfy a false premise) while trying to acquiesce to

29. Ibid., 78.

30. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 50.

expectations of some consumers and cultural critics.³¹ Ignoring black American experiences in a dominant culture that choose to portray African-American life and history as frivolous, non-contributing, unworthy, inferior and non-achieving foments a form of cultural suicide. Hughes also notes in the essay, the strange behavior among many blacks who either did not accept or acknowledge black art until their Euro-centric counterparts confirmed its validity: “For racial culture the home of a self-styled ‘high-class’ Negro has nothing better to offer. Instead there will perhaps be more aping of things white than in a less cultured or less wealthy home.”³² Seven years later discusses historian Carter G. Woodson discusses the phenomena and argues for multiculturalism in the arts:

These ‘highly educated’ Negroes, however, fail to see that it is not the Negro that takes position. The white man forces him to it, and to eradicate himself there from, the Negro leader must so deal with the situation as to develop in the segregated group the power with which they can elevate themselves. The differentness of races, more-over, is no evidence of superiority or inferiority. This merely indicates that each race has certain gifts which the other does not possess. It is by the development of these gifts that every race must justify its right to exist.³³

The question then is who sets the standards and how appropriate is it to assign the European model to African-American arts?

Du Bois and Locke both advocated for excellence and high standards in Black arts. However, Locke believes that while artists should resist the temptation to please patrons, they should also seek to attain western standards. “Negro things may reasonably

31. George Schuyler’s views in his essay, *The Negro Art-Hokum*, 662 is an example of this.

32. Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” 306.

33. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 5.

be a fad for others; for us they must be a religion. Beauty, however, is its best priest and psalms will be more effective sermons.”³⁴ Conversely, Du Bois was concerned with artistic control. According to Du Bois, “We want Negro writers to produce beautiful things but we stress the things.”³⁵ Philosophical conflicts were evident when poet Claude McKay insisted on using race and race pride as his themes. Specifically, his protest poem titled *White House*. Before publishing the work in the *Survey Graphic* magazine (the publication became major a conduit for aesthetic and political theories considered *New Negro* sentiments) Locke changed the title of McKay’s poem to *White Houses*. He believed propagandized art would receive harsh treatment and artists like McKay, Hughes, and Brown would suffer as naysayers would be forced to see the black experience in a single context. In 1934 Harlem Renaissance visual artist Romare Bearden contributed to the discussion regarding the decision of some black artists to create art that is accepted by Euro-centric critics: “This of course will impress the initiated, who through some feeling of inferiority toward their own subject matter, only require that a work of art have some sort of foreign stamp of to make it acceptable.”³⁶ Cultural critic and Harlem Renaissance scholar Houston Baker Jr. opines: “I came to realize that of what passes for self-consciously ‘scholarly’ effort on the part of black men and women in the United States is often production, self-consciously oriented to win approval from those who have a monopoly on definitions of scholarship.”³⁷ Conversely, Hughes

34. Locke, “Art or Propaganda,” 219.

35. W.E.B. Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art,” *Crisis Magazine* (October 1926): 295.

36. Romare Bearden, “The Negro Artist and Modern Art,” *Opportunity* (December 1934): 37.

37. *Ibid.*, xvii.

understood the importance of his and others' artistic choices: "An artist must be free to choose what he does, certainly, but he must also never be afraid to do what he might choose."³⁸ The schism is apparent, as many of the literary artists embraced Du Bois's and Hughes's admonitions and produced works reflecting the black experience in America.

Though much of the genre considered here was contrary to Locke's wishes, they varied in subject matter from romance to terrorism. These works range from the *Cane* by Jean Toomer, and the politically charged poems *White House, If We Must Die* and *Harlem Dancer* by Claude McKay. Countee Cullen contributed with one of the period's seminal works titled *Yet Do I Marvel*. The poem is an introspective expression of his curiosity as to why he had literary and creative instincts bestowed upon him through divine ordination, despite an existence under an oppressive regime in The United States.³⁹ James Weldon Johnson's 1927 collection of seven sermons titled *God's Trombones* is a creative and successful attempt to place the role of the back preacher in the context of poetry. Zora Neal Hurston explored southern African-American culture as an insider having grown up in the region. In 1935, Hurston published some of the folk tales she heard in *Mules and Men*. She included work songs, prison field hollers, and the early blues music prevalent before the great migration. Anthropologist Franz Boaz recognized Hurston's anthropological instincts and encouraged her to act on the curiosity regarding African-American folklore that began as a child and blossomed at Howard University. Interestingly, Hurston's academic training initially inspired an outsider approach to her

38. Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," 95.

39. The last line on Countee Cullen's poem, *Yet Do I Marvel*, "To make a poet black, and bid him sing" is indicative of the poet's torment.

research. However, she was not satisfied with the results and discusses her dilemma in her autobiography:

The glamour of Barnard College was still upon me. I dwelt in marble halls. I knew where the material was all right. But, I went about asking, in carefully Barnadese, ‘Pardon me, but do you know any folk tales or folk songs?’ The men and women who had whole treasuries of material just seeping through their pores, looked at me and shook their heads.⁴⁰

Hurston, Hughes, and Locke recognized the importance of the period’s arts, particularly their impact on the lives of consumers. Increasingly, it was becoming apparent to some that African-American art could and should be used exclusively to advocate for social change.

In 1926, Du Bois addressed the NAACP annual conference in Chicago and chose as his topic, the role of African-American arts. Du Bois’s speech, *The Criteria of Negro Art*, is indicative of how divisive the subject was. The fact that he chose to discuss the impact and possibilities of using the arts as exposes’ of the struggles of African-American showed that he recognized the quality and validity of the period’s arts. Du Bois believes that it was necessary for black artists to aspire beyond the Euro-centric model of beauty and success. Indeed, African-American artists should seek to recreate the truth with regards to their existence which would serve as a conduit for liberty. Du Bois states his position,

The apostle of Beauty thus becomes the apostle of Truth and Right not by choice but inner and outer compulsion. Free he is but his freedom is never bounded by Truth and Justice, and slavery only dogs him when he is denied the right to tell the Truth or recognize an ideal of justice. Thus art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that

5. 40. Zora Neal Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1942), 144-

whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped and silent.⁴¹

Du Bois believes that striving for the Euro-centric model is a fruitless endeavor when the artist is creating contrary to their instincts or producing as an outsider. It is not clear if the period's performing arts were in the context of his theory, but 1926, blues and jazz music were integral to the era's cultural experience, and Louis Armstrong's performing artistry was fueling the genres' aesthetic importance.

Subsequently, Louis Armstrong's impact on the genre's popularity is more than an unintended consequence as Hughes and others created important visual and literary works with blues music (and the associated cultural behaviors) as a theme.

Simultaneously, Armstrong's career as one of blues music's a chief contributor was on a trajectory that paralleled the performing art's approbation in American culture. Major recording companies created "race record" divisions as a marketing strategy to take advantage of blues and jazz music's rise in popularity. Armstrong's importance as a progenitor of the blues music lies in the fact that besides his hundreds of recordings as a leader with his Hot Five and Hot Seven Bands, he recorded one hundred fourteen times as a sideman (accompanist) to other blues artists.⁴² They included some of the genre's more popular vocalists, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Mamie Smith. Researcher Gilbert M. Erskine surmised: "It is no secret that Louis Armstrong did some of his best playing

41. Ibid., 296.

42. See the detailed discographies (Appendices A and B).

accompanying singers on their recordings.”⁴³ In almost every studio setting, period performing artists were expressing through blues music the social indicators predominant in African-American life. They often included a failed romance, lost or no employment, contemplating death, victim racially motivated terrorism, and other social injustices.

Louis Armstrong took advantage of opportunities to express cultural pride by evoking improvised creations and vocal techniques that while remaining faithful to the context of the art considered here (blues and jazz music) was sub-consciously transforming the American music canon. Specifically, though his improvised trumpet solos and vocalese may have been in the moment of immediate creativity, it was intentional. Armstrong’s art and subsequent impact alluded to are apparent in his 1928 rendition of *West End Blues*. The recording is a masterful reflection created by an artist/revolutionary whose success was due primarily to his ability to make those who would otherwise subject him to the ravages Jim Crow laws and bigotry, comfortable while simultaneously making an artistic and political statement. Transforming a culture through music can be revolutionary. However, it is not uncommon for artists to question their direction regarding adhering to preset standards or following creative urges. Armstrong’s improvisational choices in *West End Blues* were executed with the confidence of revolutionary determined to make an artistic statement. Interestingly, the recording came on the heels of Hughes’s essay, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* as he was responding to George Schuyler’s publication, *The Negro Art-Hokum* earlier that year. Schuyler’s essay questioned the quality and validity of the period’s arts.

43. Gilbert M. Erskine, “‘Countin’ The Blues: A Survey of the Recordings of Louis Armstrong Accompanying Singers in the 1920s,” *The Second Line* (Spring, 1976): 10.

It became one of the most thorough discussions regarding the age old question. Who sets the artistic standards?

An analysis of Armstrong's opening fanfare (see figure 3) reveals not only the artist's command of the art but a codifying of (through music) Hughes's position. The point here is that Armstrong juxtaposed period's chief performing art (African-American folk music) with an improvised European (Western) classical trumpet fanfare resulting in a seminal moment in the history of American music. Indeed, Armstrong's choices are reflective of Hughes's theory that "when he chooses to touch on the relations between Negroes and whites in this country with their many overtones and undertones surely, and especially for literature and the drama, there is an inexhaustible supply of themes at hand."⁴⁴ Armstrong's rendition of *West End Blues* is an example of art produced from the perspective of an agent of change. Literary critic Houston Baker Jr. notes the propensity of some change agents to deconstruct or arrange the deformation of masks as a tool for liberation. In this context, Armstrong's artistry of juxtaposing Western art music with blues music is a display, or a "coding of African, tribal, or social sounds as active, outgoing resistance and response to oppressive ignorance and silencing."⁴⁵ Some scholars believe that a common characteristic among all artists is a propensity to question their paths regarding the adherence to preset standards or following creative urges. In this context, an analysis of Armstrong's choices in *West End Blues* and the theories expressed by Langston Hughes in *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* will reveal a

44. Hughes, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, 307.

45. Houston Baker Jr., *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*, 104.

performing artist embracing (per Hughes' admonitions) the cultural uniqueness born out of blues music.

The first measure of Armstrong's opening fanfare was typical of much of the Western music literature written for the trumpet (see Figure 3). Atypical, however, was Armstrong's immediate departure (measure six) to the blues. Hughes unwittingly discusses the people who influenced young Armstrong: "But then there are the low-down folks, the so-called common element, and they are the majority-may the Lord be praised!

Figure 3

Trumpet in B \flat

West End Blues

Louis Armstrong Fanfare

Louis Armstrong
Transcribed by
Michael Decuir

Figure 3. Louis Armstrong's opening fanfare to *West End Blues*

The people who have their nip of gin on Saturday nights and are not too important to themselves or community, or too well fed, or too learned to watch the lazy world go round.”⁴⁶ Hughes further asserts, “They furnish a wealth of colorful distinctive material for any artist because they still hold their own individuality in the face of American

46. Hughes, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, 306.

standardizations.”⁴⁷ In Armstrong’s New Orleans neighborhood (called the “Battlefield” because of a profusion of violent crimes), the “low down people” had to endure a depressed economy which played a role in fostering pernicious characters that created shortcomings in his community.⁴⁸ Armstrong discusses his neighborhood, “James Alley- not Jane Alley as some people call it-lies in the very heart of what is called The Battlefield because the toughest characters in town used to live there, and would shoot and fight so much.”⁴⁹ Armstrong immediately gives the listener a glimpse of the western music tradition of using trumpet fanfares to generate anticipation of an impending event.⁵⁰ Armstrong’s aforementioned immediate departure to the blues was atypical to American music. Similarly, Hughes endorsed artists to embracing their African-American instincts. To this end, Armstrong successfully navigated (in the context of twelve bar blues choruses) a call-response vocalese and improvised solo after a trumpet fanfare that suggested anything but the slow melancholy nature of the song.⁵¹ Hughes further postulates that when African-Americans are taught to embrace the Euro-centric model or Western art as the standard, a degree of self-hate arises, especially when all art has to meet that standard. According to Hughes, “The whisper of ‘I want to be white’

47. Ibid.

48. Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 73-88.

49. Ibid., 7-8.

50. The reader should note that there is an error on beat four of the first measure. It should be G#.

51. In this context, a chorus is a twelve bar or measured sequence which is then repeated with a different text.

runs through their minds.”⁵² Hughes’s next point is ironic when the essay’s antagonist and Armstrong are juxtaposed, and the reader considers their cultural frame of reference. “One sees immediately how difficult it would be for an artist born in such a home to interest himself in interpreting the beauty of his own people. He is never taught to see that beauty. He is taught rather not to see it, or if he does, to be ashamed of it when it is not to Caucasian patterns.”⁵³ Indeed, Armstrong’s innate ability to see beauty even in some of the worst aspects of life in New Orleans during his childhood and adolescence helped him codify and exemplify Hughes’s theory.⁵⁴

European or Western art-music composers have used trumpet fanfares to set an ambiance in music since the instrument’s inclusion in western classical music.⁵⁵ Most of blues and jazz music’s earliest trumpet pioneers, Buddy Bolden, Freddie Keppard, and Manuel Perez used a similar approach (fanfares) to announce events and lure crowds on many occasions in New Orleans. Armstrong adopted the same approach in *West End Blues*. Bolden, Keppard, and Perez’s performing arts were steep in his memory as he recalled the mores and folkways present during his youth.⁵⁶ His salient musical instincts are evident when after a musical ascent in western art-music fashion, he immediately cascades with a blues descent culminating with a definitive augmented conclusion,

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 307.

54. Thomas Brothers’ *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans* gives the reader an in debt view Armstrong’s childhood community.

55. The reader is encouraged to hear various examples of the use of the trumpet in western art-music. An example of this practice can be heard in Ludwig Van Beethoven’s *Lenoir Overture*.

56. Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 73-88.

played as if repeating the musical motif would ensure that the listener understands and anticipates the art that follows. To this end, Armstrong successfully juxtaposed African-American folk music (blues) with a European (Western) classical trumpet fanfare and the combination resulted in a seminal moment in the history of American music. Hughes explains, “And when he chooses to touch on the relations between Negroes and whites in this country with their innumerable overtones and undertones surely, and especially for literature and the drama, there is an inexhaustible supply of themes at hand.”⁵⁷ Hughes theorizes that artistic choices such as Armstrong’s in *West End Blues* could potentially achieve acceptance of African-American cultural as contributions to American culture.

A careful examination of the cultural origins of region’s music and behavior shows the correlation with Hughes’s theory. Specifically, New Orleans bred musicians (particularly to those who like Armstrong migrated north to Chicago and or northeast to Harlem) had a significant cultural impact on the music during the Harlem Renaissance. The migrating musicians were familiar with, and more than likely had opportunities to create while earning a living at “West End.” Their interactions took place in the context of the city’s ruling class designated Sundays as the day off to party in the same tradition of the enslaved in Congo Square did on the same day of the week. The city’s white and black population developed this unique folkway and according to Armstrong biographer Thomas Brothers,

When Protestant Americans began moving to New Orleans in large numbers after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, they were shocked to discover how the French and Spanish Catholics behaved on Sundays: it was not a day of contemplation and remorse but rather one of gambling, picnicking, dancing,

57. Hughes, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, 306.

and drinking. (This was precisely how Place Congo had fit into the local scene, as the weekly slave version of Sunday celebration).⁵⁸

Brothers comments further,

The train delivered them all (musicians and party-goers) to the western end of the line, a spot known simply as ‘West End’ and later immortalized in Armstrong’s recording of *West End Blues*, from 1927. Whites disembarked on one side, blacks on the other. Bands still looking for work that day auditioned on the boardwalk, right at the train stop, trying to catch the attention of disembarking passengers.⁵⁹

Competition and interaction between downtown, uptown bands as well as some white bands bred creativity. Just as Bolden and Robicheaux competed on Sundays for crowds at adjacent Johnson and Lincoln Parks in the Carrollton section of the city, groups followed suit at the “West End” gatherings. The *West End Blues* musicians understood their role(s) and were aware of jazz pioneers Buddy Bolden’s and John Robicheaux’s legendary competitions as well as the legacy of their slave fore-parents’ cultural behavior in Congo Square. Artists interacted with each other, sharing musical ideas while being proud of their origins within the city. Brothers discusses the sources and resulting cultural outcomes: “It has been claimed that cultural innovation often comes from the margins of society. New Orleans had lots of margins, and they were all connected in some slippery way to every other venue along any number of musical social tangents.”⁶⁰

It is of significant note that Armstrong would have encountered the question of race, culture, and artistic choices in terms standards while in Harlem. The attitudes of the

58. Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans* (New York, London: W.W. Norton Co. 2006), 223.

59. *Ibid.*, 223

60. *Ibid.*, 224.

new creative residents such as Armstrong, Cullen, Hurston, and Sterling Brown and

Aaron Douglas did not go unnoticed by Locke:

The migrant masses, shifting from countryside to city, hurdle several generations of experience at a leap, but more important, the same thing happens spiritually in the life-attitudes and self-expression of the young Negro, in his poetry, his art, his education and his new outlook, with the additional advantage, of course, of the poise and greater certainty of knowing what it is all about.⁶¹

The musician's quest for acceptance by society forced the establishment of boundaries between Harlem and Manhattan. To this end, the label “jungle music” would have inspired Locke to shun any art that adhered to those aesthetics, intent notwithstanding and in the context of his theory. However, by 1926 blues and jazz music were integral to the period's cultural experience and Louis Armstrong's performing artistry was fueling the genres' aesthetic importance.

Armstrong's cultural contributions seem to have soared above the fray while covertly inspiring the literary world with his individuality and improvisational choices.⁶² Jazz music served as a conduit for the opportunity for individual expression while creating art instantly, and few mastered it as well as him during the third decade of the twentieth century. His rendition of *West End Blues* came during the midst of the Du Bois-Locke-Hughes-Schuyler debate. Armstrong's improvised introduction (“see Figure 3”) is art in its purest sense, and though musicologists have recognized the solo as a historically significant artistic expression, it has been heard primarily in the context of the American jazz canon. Historians Donald D. Megill and Richard S. Demory opine, “Perhaps the most celebrated and thoroughly analyzed record of this period is ‘West End Blues,’

61. Locke, *The New Negro*, 48.

62. See Figure 1 in Chapter I.

recorded by Louis Armstrong in June 1928 with the Hot Five. Armstrong begins the King Oliver tune with a trumpet solo that according to many jazz historians redirected the course of jazz.”⁶³ Moreover, Armstrong’s improvised solo is indicative of an instinctive artistry bridging Du Bois’s and Locke’s arguments (see Figure 4).

West End Blues (Solo)

Louis Armstrong
Transcribed By
Michael DeCuir

trumpet in B \flat

Figure 4. Louis Armstrong’s improvised solo in *West End Blues*

Armstrong’s body of work from *Chimes Blues* in 1923 through *West End Blues* in 1928 and *Yoddle Blues No. 9* (with country music icon, Jimmie Rodgers) in 1930 set the standard for American music, instrumental and vocal as aspiring musicians have studied and imitated his recordings with the Hot Five and Hot Seven groups. Armstrong’s art, particularly his choices in *West End Blues* mirrors Hughes’s theory of race pride in art. A common characteristic among all artists is a propensity to question their paths regarding adhering to preset standards or following creative urges. In this context, an analysis of

63. Ibid., 60

Armstrong's choices in *West End Blues* and the theories expressed by Langston Hughes in *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* will show a performing artist embracing (per Hughes's admonitions) the cultural uniqueness born out of blues music.

Further analysis of *West End Blues* shows that Armstrong's opening fanfare cleverly establishes a sense of anticipation that gives no hint of the song's actual dirge-like setting. The accompanying musicians on the recording are pianist Earl "Fatha" Hines, trombonist Fred Robinson, clarinetist Jimmy Strong, Mancy Carr on banjo, and fellow New Orleanian, Zutty Singleton on drums.⁶⁴ It is evident that the musicians are all steeped in the blues tradition as the session's leader (Armstrong) embraced the West African and African-American music tradition of call-response.⁶⁵ Specifically, Armstrong's role after the introduction became a supportive one. The first chorus begins with Strong's melodic statement and Armstrong's vocal imitation. An analysis of the musical approach and the resulting polyphony of the wind instruments in a traditional New Orleans brass band was explored earlier in *Texas Moaner Blues* (see Figure 2). The genius in Armstrong's vocal response is evident as he instinctively chooses not to imitate Strong verbatim. To the contrary, Armstrong embellishes the melody just as an early traditional jazz clarinetist would. However, rather than playing cascading melodic lines or fanfare type statements when he begins his improvised solo, he chooses to create a contrary mood with rhythmic differentiations in an improvisational context. Hughes acknowledges and encourages such creative instincts:

64. This roster was the mainstay of the Armstrong's Hot Seven group.

65. See Olly Wilson's conclusions in "The Significance of the Relationship Between Afro-American Music and West African Music" referred to in Chapter I.

Certainly there is, for the American Negro artist who can escape the restrictions the more advanced among his own group put upon him, a great field of unused material ready for his art. Without going outside his race, and even among better classes with their 'white' culture and conscious American manners, but still Negro enough to be different, there is still sufficient matter to furnish a black artist for a lifetime of work.⁶⁶

Armstrong's improvised solo (see Figure 4) begins on a single note (after an anacrusis) sustained for four measures, unheard of then. His inspired creativity is evident when the listener realizes that despite having a plethora of melodic choices available via "blues" scales and modes, Armstrong becomes a minimalist artist and reduces his creative options to one note.

Armstrong's keen sense of rhythm and meter, born out of the music and rhythms he heard on the streets of New Orleans, is evident when what initially sounds like a variation of the initial anacrusis is repeated four times. His lyrical, rhythmic, and metric senses are distinct in measures five through nine. His improvised melodic line then becomes a statement that evolves in and out of the established meter in such a fashion that the listener gets the sense that he is reiterating the musical point made at the end of his introductory fanfare. Armstrong mirrors Hughes theory that "An artist must be free to choose what he does, certainly, but he must be never afraid to do what he might choose."⁶⁷ Armstrong's use of sixteenth note ornamentations is a creative use of space as he ends his improvised solo after one chorus leaving the listener wanting more. It was as if he was affirming Hughes' admonishments two years after the fact. Hughes discusses the artist's dilemma, "But to my mind, it is the duty of the younger Negro artist, if he

66. Hughes, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, 307.

67. Ibid.

accepts any duties at all from outsiders, to change through the force of his art that old whispering ‘I want to be white,’ hidden in the aspirations of his people, to ‘Why should I want to be white? I am a Negro---and beautiful.’”⁶⁸ Armstrong’s improvisation and vocalese choices in *West End Blues* affirm Hughes’s admonitions.

Historically, the degree of worth assigned to a single piece of artwork in any medium or a body of work from an artist or group is in most cases, determined after the historical period has passed. Indeed, it is not unusual to label art with significant post-haste. Conversely, there are measurable indicators of artistic value which appear simultaneous to the production of the art when one views the critical impact that art has on contemporary artists. For example, Hughes, Armstrong, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Duke Ellington, Meta Warrick-Fuller, Zora Neal Hurston and Aaron Douglas, all in varied mediums, produced works that inspired other artists to pursue their voices and contribute to the movement. These artists, in various mediums were aware each other's contributions contrary the contrarian position that believed that the works of art were devoid of cross-influences. Hughes was conscience of the cultural impact taking place as he mentioned with pride the works of Toomer, Cullen, Roland Hayes and Paul Robeson in his seminal essay. However, George Schuyler had a contrary theory suggesting that the African-American arts of the entire period were somehow subpar. Specifically, he believed that the literary and visual arts were mere imitations of European models, values, standards, and barometers. Schuyler opines, “As was for the literature, painting and sculpture of Aframericans---such as there is---It is identical in kind with the kind of literature, painting, and sculpture of white Americans: that is, it shows more or less

68. Ibid.

evidence of European influence.”⁶⁹ The latter is contrary to the very foundation (improvisational techniques) of American jazz and blues music. Certainly, critics have the prerogative to argue for the placement of black art in Eurocentric parameters. However, doing so fifty or more years later puts the criticism in another context. Conversely, blues and jazz music are intrinsic to the American music canon. Indeed, two of the nation's indigenous performing art canons produced during the decade after World War I, and in the midst of an American Nationalistic search, were both celebrated and loathed in the context of political, and philosophical opinions of individuals searching for paths to civil liberties in the twentieth-century.

Indeed, the Harlem community was also not immune to the fight for social justice as it was home to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association. The unique political and social climates that impacted the period's artists were too affected by the cultural climate. There were certainly cross-influences as blues music's rise in popularity was evident beyond Du Bois's "Talented Tenth." philosophy⁷⁰ David Levering Lewis discusses jazz pioneer Fletcher Henderson's role in the music's impact on the period considered here: "The Savoy jam sessions broadcast over the radio, were to American popular music what Dearborn was to transportation. Fletcher Henderson himself represented in his culture and character another significant development—the sufferance if not approval of jazz by

69. George Schuyler, "The Negro Art Hokum," 310.

70. Du Bois used the term "Talented Tenth" to describe who he considered the best and brightest black intellectuals.

some of the Talented Tenth.”⁷¹ Additionally, one must take note of the influence of the genre’s body of work on subsequent artistic periods. For example, Armstrong’s musical approach, replete with vestiges of West African and New Orleans cultural nuances became prevalent two decades later in the advent of “bebop” with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk. Specifically, one can hear recollections of Armstrong’s stop-time explorations in *Texas Moaner Blues* (see Figure 1) in Parker’s recording, *Parker’s Mood*.⁷² Armstrong’s rhythmic differentiations are present in many of Monk’s compositions such as *Evidence* and *Green Chimneys*. Indeed, Gillespie’s approach to expanding the range of the trumpet in an improvisational setting is similar to Armstrong’s opening fanfare in *West End Blues*. One can also hear the underpinnings of Armstrong’s improvisational choices in Gillespie and Parker’s compositions, *Koko* and *Hot House*. Instinctively, Hughes acknowledges the genre’s influence on his work: “Most of my own poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know. In many of them I try to grasp and hold some meanings and rhythms of jazz.”⁷³ Hughes was clear about what the genre means to him: “But jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America; the external tom-tom beating in the Negro soul----tom-tom of revolt against the weariness of a white world, a world of subway trains, and work, work, work; the tom-tom of joy and laughter, and pain, and swallowed in a smile.”⁷⁴

71. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 173.

72. The chronological progression of American Jazz history includes Fletcher Henderson’s “big band” creation to the small ensembles which focused on individual soloists expanding the improvisational vocabulary. John Burk “Dizzy” Gillespie, Charlie Christian, Bud Powell and Charlie Parker were but four of “bebop” era’s pioneers.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

It is historically significant to note that the performing art that was part of the cultural debate during the Harlem Renaissance (blues and jazz music) was introduced to Europe as early as 1918 when James Reese Europe and the 369th Infantry Regimental Band toured France during World War I. In 1919, one year after the war's end, Bechet, and Josephine Baker were a part of African-American composer, Will Marion Cook's "Southern Syncopaters Orchestra." The group toured France, Germany, Turkey and Russia and Istanbul. Earlier, Baker received rave reviews when the orchestra became a part of a musical titled *Revue Negre* in Paris. She remained in the city when the band successfully toured most of Europe the near East and Russia. Her decision to stay was salient as she unwittingly contributed to the misguided narrative that the Black American folk music was born out of savage instincts.⁷⁵ While these performing artists were exposing American folk music to people recovering from the ravages of World War I, Armstrong, Duke Ellington and other African-American musicians such as Fletcher Henderson and Fats Waller were creating art racially segregated venues such as the infamous Cotton Club.

Though at times on opposite ends of the continuum, Locke and Du Bois shared a similar respect for the period's arts. Artists in any cultural era will produce works that challenge social and political norms and or rise to an aesthetic barometer established in their community and beyond when left to their own devices. For example, Thomas Wright "Fats" Waller's 1925 composition, *Black and Blue* was written for a Broadway musical. The song's text embraced the mental stress of spurned romantic love. In this

75. See Eileen Southern's discussion of Josephine Baker's impact on European attitudes regarding African-American performing art in *The Music of Black Americans* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 439.

case the loss of a spouse to a woman with less pigmentation. However, Louis Armstrong's rendition of the song was adopted by the black community as a social protest, embracing the refrain "why am I so black and blue."⁷⁶ If the epistemological critique of the period does not take into consideration the context (social and political) of the period as well as the impact on subsequent genres, the analysis is faulty at best. Charges that many of the artists adhered to their patron's aesthetic values are true but so did European artists Bach and Handel.⁷⁷ Yet their body of work is considered salient to the evolution of western performing art.

Locke's position was not baseless. The question of what should African-American artists choose was an ever present dilemma. Some black artists who depended on white patrons felt pressured to produce art that would be considered acceptable. The Eurocentric barometer ingrained in American culture made it difficult for Locke not to be concerned about black performing, literary and visual arts' place in American and world culture. From 1925 through the end of the decade, Locke and Du Bois publicly debated the purpose and virtue of African-American arts and two of the famous works analyzed in this chapter, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* and *West End Blues*, contributed to the affirmation that the art embraces all aspects of the African-American culture. Indeed, some aspects of the *New Negro* theory put forth by Alain Locke and George Schuyler in *The Negro Art-Hokum*, argue that art which is strictly African-American, is admittance of inferiority. Consequently, artists who agreed found it difficult to produce creations that were not imitative of European precursors.

76. See the lyrics to Fats Waller's *Black and Blue*.

77. Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York: Norton, 1960), 143-300.

By 1925, African-American blues music had become a permanent fixture in American culture with many of its creators such as Bessie Smith and W.C. Handy residing in the Harlem community. The economic successes of their recordings, as well as their live performances, were indicative of the arts' popularity among black and white citizens. More importantly, the values alluded to in the text of many of the songs served as a liberating aesthetic in that it recognized through music those aspects of life (failed romance, racial oppression, and job loss) which caused pain. Indeed, the first step of liberation from those life nuances is to recognize that they exist and their origins. Poets Claude McKay and Langston Hughes (who Locke considered excellent examples of the *New Negro*) often wrote works with the blues music as its subject.⁷⁸ The popularity of the music was such that white patrons who black novelist Zora Neal Hurston called "negrotarians" readily attended racially segregated venues which featured African-American artists such as the Cotton Club and Roseland Ballrooms in New York to get as close as possible to what they perceived as African-American culture. Consumers were motivated by a fascination with what they considered accurate depictions of black life. They readily embraced the risqué presentations associated with the music while on nightly forays in Harlem. The hypocrisy lies in the fact that despite the sophistication of the performing art, its critics readily dismissed the Negro experience as happy, frolicking, and devoid of any inhibitions.⁷⁹

78. *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Penguin Books, 1996) is an excellent source.

79. See Rudolph Fisher's "The Caucasian Storms Harlem," *The American Mercury*, August, 1927, 393-98.

Harlem Renaissance scholar, David Levering Lewis surmises that the ultimate failure of the Harlem Renaissance was inevitable: “The Depression accelerated a failure that was inevitable, for the Harlem Renaissance could no more have succeeded as a positive social force, whether the health of Wall Street, than its participants could have been persuaded to try a different stratagem of racial advancement.”⁸⁰ One should note that despite major events such as the 1929 stock market crash and the saturation of blues music to the consuming American public, Armstrong’s art still flourished as a significant entity in American music. Despite the economic crash, he continued to record as a sideman and group leader.⁸¹ The crowning point of the decade regarding his cultural influence was when in 1930, he recorded *Yoddle Blues No. 9* with “country” music pioneer Jimmy Rodgers. Furthermore, his 1930s recordings of Tin Pan Alley pop songs such as *Stardust*, *China Town*, *My China Town*, and *Dancing Cheek to Cheek*, were similarly popular with the consuming public.

80. Ibid., 305-06.

81. See Armstrong’s discography as a leader and sideman at the end of this research.

CHAPTER IV
LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND BLUES MUSIC'S IMPACT
AS A FUNCTIONAL ART

The emergence of early New Orleans jazz music as American popular music owes much of its beginnings to the rise in popularity of blues music from the Mississippi Delta (see Figure 5) and the sacred music worship practices generic to the region. The early jazz music that Louis Armstrong heard as an adolescent was the result of cultural behaviors which included performing art practices at parades, funerals, outdoor events, and in brothels. Specifically, there was and still is a communal approach to making music with blues music as the foundation for the improvisational art form that is jazz music. The advent of blues music was the result of economic pressures upon the African-American community after the abolishment of slavery and the end of the Civil War.¹ Blues music's roots served as a functional art, and it existentially grew to arguably the nation's most popular music during the period considered here. Subsequently, Armstrong's instrumental and vocal contributions to the genre served as inspirations to Harlem Renaissance literary artists Langston Hughes, Zora Neal Hurston, and Sterling Brown as well as visual artists such as Aaron Douglas, Archibald Motley, and Romare Bearden.

1. See Amiri Baraka's *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1963), 50.

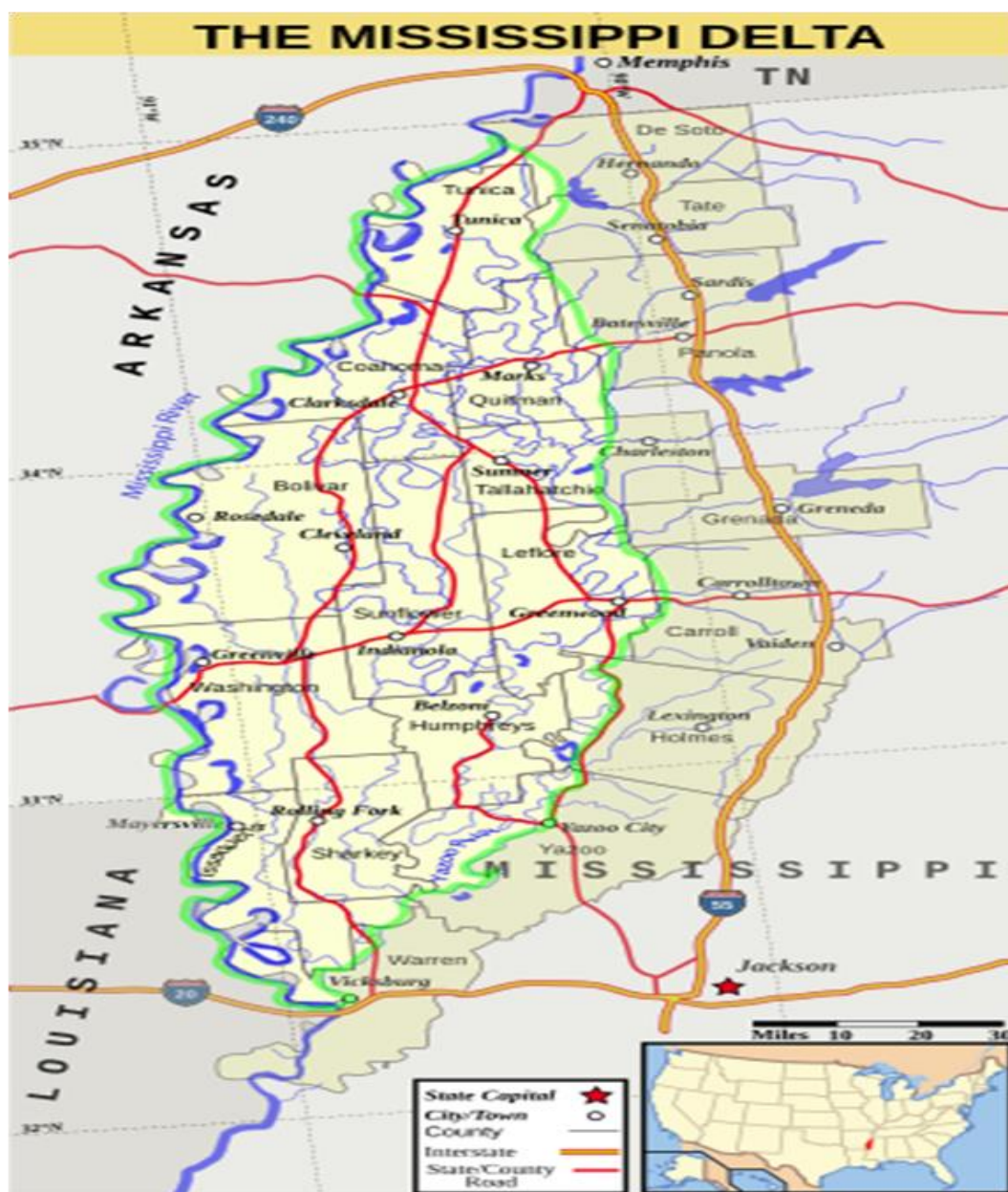


Figure 5. The Mississippi Delta Region where much of American blues music was created

Source: Google Images.

The blues music that Armstrong grew up with in New Orleans was created in conjunction with the labor associated with the agrarian regions outside of the city.

Specifically, the music assisted with the process of planting and harvesting sugar, cotton, and tobacco, which were labor intensive and demanded worker cooperation and coordination. Blues music composer, entrepreneur, and theorist W.C. Handy describes the music's origins as an apparatus for coordinating labor and thus its function as a tool for work tasks. Handy states,

In the south long ago, whenever a new man appeared for work in any of the laborer's gangs, he would be asked if he could sing. If he could, he got the job. The singing of these working men set the rhythm for the work, the pounding of hammers, the swinging of scythes; and the one who sang most lustily soon became straw boss. One man set the tune, and sang whatever sentiments lay closest to his heart.²

The role of the work group's vocal leader was of particular note to Handy as when he describes the improvisational approach and the resulting call and response technique inherent in the creation of work songs: "But whatever he [the vocal leader] sang was personal, and the others in the gang took up the melody, each fitting it with personal words of his own."³ Similarly, the worker's enslaved ancestors had used the double entendre (song texts which implicitly say one thing but possess a different meaning from the producer to the receiver) technique to covertly communicate messages. Thus, the music of the field workers served to make the work tolerable while it helped to coordinate particular tasks requiring more than one person. In both settings, the music functioned as a performing art created beyond the purview of satisfying an aesthetic. Blues musician Henry Townsend describes the ideological logistics of the creative process: "We all have something in mind and we didn't want to talk to anybody but the

2. W.C. Handy, "The Heart of the Blues," *Etude Music Magazine* (March 1940): 193-94.

3. See Olly Wilson's "The Significance of the Relationship Between Afro-American Music and West African Music," *Black Perspectives in Music* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 15-22.

burden is real heavy until you could make some kind of sound about it, you could express yourself to somebody, sort of lighten the thing up.”⁴ Social theorist Amiri Baraka describes the environmental transformation that produced the post-slavery reinvented music:

Many Negroes who were sharecroppers, or managed to purchase one of the tiny farms that dotted the less fertile lands of the South, worked in their fields alone or with their families. The old shouts and hollers were still accompaniment for the arduous work of clearing land, planting, or harvesting crops. But there was asolitude to this work that had never been present in the old slave times.⁵

The “solitude” element in the music that Baraka alludes to is a cultural phenomenon that embraces the performing art’s power to make life in Jim Crow south tolerable as well as the task or labor at hand easier. Baraka continues, “The small farms and sharecroppers’ plots produced not only what I think must have been a less self-conscious work song but a form of song or shout that did not necessarily have to be concerned with, or inspired by, *labor*.”⁶ Subsequently, the laborer/musicians discussed here imitatively used some of the same performing art techniques: call-response, a communal approach, improvisation, and double entendre. Consequently, they initiated their enslaved forbearers’ approach to music making.

For the most part, the form of the early genre consists of twelve measures or increments. However, a solo artist would often take advantage of creative freedom and make longer segments. The end result was a performing art imitative of the early vocal

4. Henry Townsend, Quoted in Houston Baker Jr., *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 113.

5. Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1963), 61.

6. *Ibid.*, 61.

leaders, work gangs and the enslaved. Their art functions as a source of relief through melancholy expressions of pain. Researcher David Evans theorizes that “All blues are lyrics in the sense that they are told from the first-person point of view and their emotional dimension is stressed.”⁷ But more than that, the music also served to satisfy the Black American search for a collective aesthetic. For many in the community, the performing art was a striking contrast and an artistic retort to the stereotypes of minstrelsy. Indeed, blues music’s impact was such that it not only satisfied an empathetic and sympathetic aesthetic quest for consumers from outside of the black community, especially those economically depressed whites. For many of them, the music satisfied a fascination and curiosity with the African-American culture. Subsequently, between 1919 and 1929, millions of blues and jazz recordings were sold. Recording companies were created specifically to take advantage of the changing aesthetics in America.

Moreover, the growing blues music field was male-dominated. Recording company owners, publishers, venue operators, recording studios, radio stations, artist managers, and record store owners were predominantly male. However, the industry’s earliest popular artists were black females. Chief among them were Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Ethel Waters. Each had her distinct style and unique approach to the performing art.⁸ The aforementioned female artistry infused the desire and thus the market for blues music. It also inspired the creation of *Black Swan Records*, as the company’s founders were descendants of the people who produced the music considered

7. David Evans, “Techniques of Blues Composition among Black Folksingers,” *Journal of American Folklore Society* 87, no. 345 (Jul-Sep. 1974): 240-49.

8. Each of these vocalists had a distinctive style and became iconic figures in the early blues recordings during the period considered here.

here. Indeed, the recording company was inspired and modeled after Booker T. Washington's vision years earlier in *The Negro Business League*.⁹ Impresario Clarence Williams who wrote and produced *Texas Moaner Blues* (referred to in the first chapter of this research) along with Harry Pace and W.C. Handy were the original owners of *Black Swan Records*. Before creating the recording company, the three were independently successful songwriters and producers. The trio decided to collaborate and create a business model that allowed for the production and distribution of African-American folk music written and performed by African-American artists. Harlem Renaissance singer and *Black Swan* recording artist, Ethel Waters described signing with the company and meeting Pace and Handy: "The same talent scout who dug me up for Cardinal (Recording Company) worked for other record companies. After catching my act at Edmond's (a Harlem night spot) a second time, he asked if I would care to make some records for Black Swan, a new company just started by Harry H. Pace and W.C. Handy, the two grand old men of Negro music."¹⁰ Simultaneously, Louis Armstrong's art and blues music's popularity were on a parallel trajectory during this period. All these factors contributed to African-American music becoming American music.

From 1923 and throughout the remainder of the period considered here, Louis Armstrong was evolving into one of America's most influential artists with seminal recordings as a vocalist and instrumentalist. Pertinent to this discussion is the fact that he also recorded as a sideman for other blues musicians on one hundred and forty-four blues

9. See Booker T. Washington's discussion of *The Negro Business League* in his autobiography *Up from Slavery* (New York: Signet Classics, 2000), 316.

10. Ethel Waters and Charles Samuel, *His Eye Is on the Sparrow* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1950), 141-42.

songs during that period.¹¹ The demand for his talents was born out of his ability to codify musical instincts that came from his experiences with the genre's New Orleans roots. Specifically, Armstrong was a product of the cultural behaviors that were practiced by African-Americans in the southern region of the United States and cultivated when they migrated to the north during and immediately after World War I. However, the contributions of those artists who remained in the south were similarly important and they too impacted the performing art's growth in popularity. This is reflective in the fascination and sales of early (solo) recordings. Period musicologist and folklorist Zora Neal Hurston was an early proponent of the genre's penchants as she researched the performance rituals of the mostly early itinerant blues musicians who remained in the south.¹² From 1923 and throughout the remainder of the period considered here, Louis Armstrong was evolving into one of America's most influential artists with seminal recordings as a vocalist and instrumentalist. Pertinent to this discussion is the fact that he also recorded as a sideman for other blues musicians on one hundred and forty-four blues songs during that period.¹³ The demand for his talents was born out of his ability to codify musical instincts that came from his experiences with the genre's roots. Specifically, Armstrong was notably a product of the cultural behaviors that were practiced by

11. See Gilbert Erskine's essay "'Countin' The Blues: A Survey of the Recordings of Louis Armstrong Accompanying Singers in The 1920s," *Second Line*, Tulane University's Hogan Jazz Archives, New Orleans, LA.

12. Zora Neal Hurston's *Mules and Men* (Philadelphia: J. B Lippincott, 1935), 1-4 is an exploration of cultural behaviors associated with blues music. Specifically, the music's live productions by itinerant artists and the willful participation by consumers in various settings.

13. See Gilbert M. Erskine's essay, "'Countin' The Blues: A Survey of the Recordings of Louis Armstrong Accompanying Singers in the 1920s," *The Second Line* (New Orleans: Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University, 1976), 10-19.

African-Americans in the southern region of the United States and cultivated when they migrated to the north during and immediately after World War I. However, the contributions of those artists who remained in the south were similarly important and they too impacted the performing art's growth in popularity. This is reflected in the fascination and sales of early (solo) recordings.

During the post-Reconstruction years, many African-Americans migrated to New Orleans seeking jobs which were plentiful on the city's riverfront. They brought with them the work songs and blues music that were used to accompany the extreme labor on plantations and sharecropper farms. Additionally, the music or functional art that the black migrant workers brought to New Orleans utilized many West African musical practices including call-response. Indeed the work songs sung by these relocated workers were very similar to the songs that had been earlier sung by the enslaved. Just as the enslaved used the technique of double entendre to send covert messages, the leader or straw boss would extol or bemoan a situation at home, be it economics, trouble with a lover, or an overbearing boss. The song usually takes on the characteristic of an antiphon as the group would reply to the leader's melodic expression by imitating the stated musical line.¹⁴ Often the response remained the same as the leader improvised new texts for every refrain. Similarly, period performing artists deployed the same improvisational techniques in the context of jazz and blues music.¹⁵ Ethnomusicologist Jeff Titon opines, "Historically, blues and jazz are more like parallel highways with crossroads between

14. The Smithsonian Institute's audio recordings of prison workers and field workers by Alan Lomax are excellent examples of the antiphonal music technique in a call-response setting.

15. Blues and jazz organist Jimmy Smith's recording of *Back at The Chicken Shack* is a great example of call and response while using improvisational techniques over a twelve bar blues form.

them. Blues can be understood as a feeling---the blues---and as a specific musical form. Jazz, which engenders complex and varied feelings, is best thought of as a technique, as a way of forming.”¹⁶ Indeed some of the earliest progenitors of the music were improvising and or “ragging” blues musicians.¹⁷

New Orleans native Charles “Buddy” Bolden was among the first generation of musicians influenced by the new music that was brought to the city by laborers from the Mississippi Delta region. Indeed, his propensity to re-create melodies helped start the stylistic movement that is the foundation of jazz improvisation. Moreover, much of what Bolden played was interpretations of the itinerant workers.¹⁸ Bolden and other early jazz musicians such as Joe “King” Oliver and eventually Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet heard the imported blues music and its cultural transformation as an improvisational art matriculating through New Orleans venues. Biographer Donald Marquis describes the ever growing influence of blues music on New Orleans culture, and Bolden’s improvisational art:

Rags and blues had been played occasionally by the brass bands; now Bolden was playing them at smaller gatherings with his smaller band. His particular brand of ragtime or blues did not occur by accident. What other bands had been doing in street parades (“ragging” the tunes as indicated by Papa Jack Laine), Bolden began doing it for a different audience---the dancers.¹⁹

16. Jeff Todd Titon, et. al., *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples*, 3rd Edition (Belmont, California: Schirmer Cengage Learning. 2009), 131.

17. “Ragging” was a description New Orleans musicians used to describe their unique method and manner of playing popular songs.

18. See Donald Marquis’ *In Search of Buddy Bolden* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 40-48.

19. *Ibid.*, 47.

Fellow musicians John Robicheaux, Manual Perez, and Bunk Johnson followed suit and soon improvising in Bolden's ragging style was not only common, but expected.

Researcher Elijah Wald notes the music's presence in late nineteenth century New Orleans: "There has always been a coterie of New Orleans patriots who claim that blues arose in that city's red-light district. Jelly Roll Morton, who was born there in 1885, said that the style was already common in his childhood."²⁰ New Orleans native and gospel music pioneer Mahalia Jackson discusses the kinds of music she heard as a child. "New Orleans was full of music when I was born and all the time I was growing up there. It was the time when they had all the brass bands. There was still music on the show boats on the Mississippi River and there were cabarets and cafes where musicians like Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver were playing Ragtime music and jazz and the blues were being played all over."²¹ Morton's and Jackson's recollections are affirmation of the post-Reconstruction presence of blues music in the region that produced jazz music.

Chronologically, the influence of blues music was present in the performing art of early jazz pioneers Buddy Bolden and John Robicheaux during the late nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century and long before Louis Armstrong's recordings in 1923 and 1924.²² Armstrong had been steeped in the music's traditions though he was relatively young and his recording career was in its infancy. Biographer Thomas Brothers comments, "Armstrong's early mastery of the blues signals his position in New Orleans

20. Elijah Wald, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: Amistad, 2005) 12.

21. Mahalia Jackson, *Movin' On Up* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), 29.

22. See Donald Marquis' discussion on Bolden and Robicheaux's roles, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 80.

Society, his position in jazz history, and indeed, his position in the history of African-American music.”²³ His early grasp of rhythm differentiation and the performance style essential to blues music were evident in the recordings of the Joe “King” Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band, specifically *Chimes Blues*. In addition to collaborating with early jazz artists Sidney Bechet and Clarence Williams in 1924, he joined the Fletcher Henderson Band which was a unique musical aggregation and a precursor to what is now known as “big bands.” His highly developed blues skills were evident in improvised solos. Author Bob Porter discusses the impact of the influx to New York of New Orleans musicians steeped in the blues tradition. According to Porter,

The key performers had to leave New Orleans in order to be heard since the Crescent City had no recording industry as such. Chicago was the initial destination, but eventually Oliver, Armstrong and Morton all came to New York. Sidney Bechet, another New Orleanian, would not emerge as a leader on records until 1932, yet his fame and virtuosity were well established in New York circles in the 1920’s. It was one thing to use blues in repertoire; it was another thing to be a convincing Blues soloist.²⁴

Henderson and fellow bandsman/arranger Don Redman often used segments of what Armstrong played (including imitating his style) as a basis for their compositions and arrangements. Jazz historian Dan Morgenstern comments, “Redman was quick to absorb many of Armstrong’s lessons. His arrangements improved considerably during Armstrong’s thirteen month stay, as did the band’s rhythm and phrasing, as well as their improvisational skills.”²⁵ Henderson and Redman’s composition *Sugarfoot Stomp* became

23. Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong’s New Orleans* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 206.

24. Louis Porter, “Blues in Jazz.” ed. B. Kirchner, *The Oxford Companion to Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 67-8.

25. Dan Morgenstern, “Louis Armstrong,” *Companion to Jazz*, ed. B. Kirchner, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 107.

one of the group's more famous pieces. The listener will hear Armstrong's influence on the duo's arrangement as well as the Henderson band's enhanced musicality.

Additionally, tenor saxophonist, Coleman Hawkins was a member of the Henderson band and came under Armstrong's influence. Hawkins is considered one of the early pioneers of modern jazz and his 1940 recording of *Body and Soul* helped usher in the "be-bop" era of jazz.²⁶ The Henderson/Redman music arrangements and compositions (filled with Armstrong's influences) subsequently reached a wider audience when bandleader Paul Whiteman (an American Caucasian conductor) introduced jazz performances and the duo's music to major, predominantly white venues across the country. Conversely, Redman, Henderson, and Whiteman heard vestiges of blues music's early proclivities. Indeed in songs like *Sugarfoot Stomp*, they were codifying in various mediums the style, rhythmic differentiation, and communal approach to the performing art that had come through the music of the early creators of the performing art.

The export of blues and jazz music to the rest of the nation and the world took many routes. New Orleans jazz and blues music pioneers like Freddie Keppard, Jelly Roll Morton, and Sidney Bechet were also a part of an exodus of artists who experienced success in other regions of the country. By 1919, the New Orleans style of ragging the music, specifically the wind instrument polyphony was gaining notoriety across the country and abroad. Morton brought the performance art to Los Angeles, while Keppard, who also went west for a time, soon migrated north.²⁷ Simultaneously, Bechet began a

26. See Ken Burns' documentary, *Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns*, Episode Eight "Risk."

27. See Sidney Bechet's discussion in his autobiography, *Treat It Gentle* (New York: DeCapo Press, 1978), 111-14.

stint with Will Marion Cook's orchestra that would take him and Josephine Baker to Europe. Interestingly, Keppard turned down an opportunity to be the first jazz band to be recorded. The new technology was believed to be a primary conduit in place to capture and promote the genre's proclivities as a performing art. Keppard's rejection of the opportunity opened the door for the all-white Original Dixie Land Jazz Band to become the first jazz band to be recorded and an early progenitor of jazz music.

Armstrong's teacher and mentor Joe "King" Oliver also departed New Orleans, taking his blues artistry to Chicago. The impact on Armstrong was profound, as he was chosen to take Oliver's place. Armstrong describes "Kid Ory's reaction after discovering his (Armstrong's) new role: "He was a little in doubt at first, but after he looked around town he decided I was the right one to have a try at taking the great one's place. What a thrill that was! To think that I was considered up to taking Joe Oliver's place in the best band in town."²⁸ However, many blues musicians did not exit the South and contributed to the genre's growth and popularity. Consequently, early solo artists such as "Blind" Lemon Jefferson, Charlie Patton, and accordionist Amedee Ardoin developed their skills traveling and performing extensively in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. However, the genre's popularity rose infinitely when in 1917 the nation decided to enter World War I and many blacks migrated north (taking their blues music aesthetics with them) to take

28. Louis Armstrong, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans* (New York: DeCapo Press, 1954), 137.

advantage of wartime employment.²⁹ The vestiges of the decision to go to war reached beyond jobs and music making and into the social order.

W.E.B. Du Bois's support of the American entrance into World War I seemed justified when the War Department agreed to create a black officer's training school. The government agency chose Des Moines, Iowa, for the school's headquarters. Interestingly, African-American support and military contributions to the war effort also had a cultural impact that was pertinent to the period considered here. One of the products of the officer's training school was the creation of two African-American regiments, the 371st and the 15th based in Harlem. The latter's band was led by Lt. James Reese Europe who had gained fame by "swinging" American popular music for the famous dancing Castles. As early as 1910 Europe earned a reputation as an excellent musician, conductor, and progenitor of African-American music. Researcher Maurice Peress noted Europe's orchestra The Clef Club's inclusion in fundraising activities for a new school of music dedicated to teaching African-Americans in Harlem: "It was Europe who suggested that the Clef Club orchestra play at a benefit for the New Settlement School for Colored People in its first year of operation." Peress opines further, "The first Clef Club concert was a great success. It led to more Carnegie Hall concerts."³⁰ According to military historian Lt. Col. (retired) Michael Lee Lanning the white regimental commander, Colonel Hayward developed a deep admiration and respect for the black soldiers under

29. See Amiri Baraka's discussion of this phenomenon in *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (St. Louis, MO: Progressive Music Co., 1963), 81-94 as well as Elijah Wald's theories in *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: Harper Collins Books, 2004), 14-42 are excellent sources. Both publications are referred to in this chapter.

30. Maurice Peress, *Dvorak to Duke Ellington: A Conductor Explores American Music and its African American Roots* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 63.

his command and helped Europe recruit the band: “Before leaving New York, Hayward had assisted Lt. James Europe in recruiting some of the finest musicians in the North-east and secured funds from regional business leaders to buy instruments to form the regimental band. In addition to increasing morale in the regiment, Europe and his musicians became known as the band that brought jazz to France.”³¹ Composers and Harlem Renaissance contributors Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake were two of the musicians recruited to join the regiment’s band. After the war, Sissle and Blake wrote many of the period’s popular songs including the short-lived and all-black Broadway stage plays *Chocolate Dandies* and *Shuffle Along*. Interestingly, one of Blake’s songs from *Shuffle Along* was *I’m Just Wild About Harry* which years later became the campaign song for President Harry Truman.

The unit and its band became one of the most decorated American military outfits. They were the only group to earn the Croix de Guerre and chosen to lead the march of Allied troops to the Rhine. The French government decorated one hundred and seventy-one of the regiment’s soldiers, which was more than any other American military outfit. It was the band’s performing arts under Europe’s leadership that may have more to do with its notoriety than anything else.³² The group played traditional marches, plantation songs, and their signature song, *The Memphis Blues*. The admiring and grateful French called them “The Hellfighters.” They called themselves “Men of Bronze.” Europe explains his successful methodology: “I have to call a daily rehearsal of my band to

31. Lt. Col. Michael Lee Lanning, *The African-American Soldier: From Crispus Attucks to Colin Powell* (New York: Kensington Publishing Co., 2004), 139.

32. See David Levering Lewis’s discussion in *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 3-24.

prevent the musicians from adding more to their music than I wish them to.”³³ Europe’s importance to African-American music began years earlier back in America, in 1914, as he organized a booking agency, social club, and musician’s union called the Clef Club. He and his group also recorded *Memphis Blues* before going to war.

Armstrong, too, was exporting the southern rooted music beyond the confines of the region. In 1919, he began a stint on a Mississippi River cruise boat as the lead cornetist with the Fate Marable Orchestra. The cruise vessel’s (*The Sidney*) excursions took Armstrong as far away as Davenport, Iowa, and word of his improvisational exploits traveled rapidly. Many who had never heard blues music or jazz, mainly played with the New Orleans brass band style, were astounded. However, Armstrong was forced to confront one of the issues that caused the physical and cultural divide between New Orleans uptown (mostly improvising musicians) and their downtown (formerly trained) counterparts: the inability/ability to read noted music to the degree that mirrors their improvisational technique. “Later on I found out that Fate Marable had just as many jazz greats as Kid Ory, and they were better men besides they could read music and they could improvise.”³⁴ Biographer Terry Teachout comments, “Though Armstrong knew how to read music, he had yet to work full-time with an ensemble that played written arrangements, and he saw in the offer a chance to hone his skills.”³⁵ Armstrong’s influence is significant when one placed into the context that a young trumpeter Bix

33. James Reese Europe, “A Negro Explains Jazz,” *Literary Digest* (April 26, 1919): 28-9.

34. Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 182.

35. Terry Teachout, *Pops, A Life of Louie Armstrong* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), 48.

Beiderbecke was one of the thousands who heard him (Armstrong) play on several occasions when the cruise boat docked in his hometown, Davenport Iowa. During the Harlem Renaissance, Beiderbecke became one of the first white musicians to earn notoriety for his ability to improvise blues music while in a jazz ensemble. His development as a jazz artist and the development of other white musicians suffered as they were legally and /or culturally forbidden to play with black musicians. Interestingly, Beiderbecke and other white musicians in the Chicago area who were hoping to learn the improvisational art from genre's creators received a boost. In 1922 and at the dawn of the period considered here, Armstrong's career received another positive lift when mentor Joe "King" Oliver recruited him to join his band in Chicago. The move to Chicago was significant as Beiderbecke and desirous others took advantage of Armstrong's presence and participated in after hour music sessions, out of the watchful eyes of authorities.

Armstrong became a part of Joe "King" Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. The ensemble was earning notoriety transporting the New Orleans often outdoor brass band performance style to Chicago in /door venues. For his part, Armstrong took advantage of the opportunity to match wits with his mentor and early jazz pioneer. Southern blues music was at the core of the group's performance art. Most of 1922 was spent sharing the New Orleans style of performing jazz and blues music with other curious musicians and novices. Indeed, Chicago was more than the location of Oliver and Armstrong's early successes. It was also an important geographic spot in terms of the progression of blues music's popularity in America.³⁶ Many of the migrating population from the South

36. See Elijah Wald's discussion on black musician's migration in *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: Harper Collins Books, 2004), 3-36.

brought blues music and the cultural behaviors associated with them to the city. While the southern transplants were enjoying glimpse of the culture they left behind, Armstrong was using his familiarity with Oliver's musical instincts to perfect his own improvisational and creative intuitions.³⁷ Venues such as the Lincoln Garden and the Vendome were the chief conduits for Armstrong, Oliver, and later New Orleans native brothers Johnny and Warren Dodds. Armstrong and Oliver developed a duet style of improvising that was unique and trend setting. He also met his second wife and pianist Lillian Armstrong. Mrs. Armstrong was instrumental in his decision to go to New York and join the Fletcher Henderson Band as well as start his own groups, the Hot Five and Hot Seven. Indeed, by 1919 the southern black folk music that is the blues was experiencing consistent trajectory in popularity as they were increasingly marketed to post-war migrants. These migrants, who identified with the indigenous music of their recent past, caused the rise in the popularity of the blues. They were joined by curious consumers from outside of the culture who were aesthetically pleased with the art.

The music progressed from mostly unaccompanied and unrecorded solo performances to a female dominated genre. Amiri Baraka describes the transformation, "It was the first Negro music that appeared in a formal context as entertainment, though it still contained the harsh, uncompromising reality of the earlier blues forms."³⁸ The major recording companies, Okeh, Vocallion, Paramount, and Columbia all took advantage of the music's popularity and marketed their blues music catalogue as "race" records. Some of their earliest stars were Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, Trixie Smith, Ida Cox,

37. See Armstrong's comments in *Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns*, Episode Two "The Gift."

38. *Ibid.*, 86.

and Sippie Wallace. The folk music also caught the attention of American mainstream white composers such as Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and Paul Whiteman who cashed in on the popularity of blues and jazz music and produced a body of work that became known as *Tin Pan Alley*. However teacher, composer, musician, and musicologist W.C. Handy had misgivings about cultural outsiders becoming producers of the African-American folk music. Handy explains, “I have the feeling the real blues can be written only by a Negro who keeps his roots in the life of the race.”³⁹ Simultaneously, instrumental ensembles such as Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band, Freddy Keppard’s Orchestra, and The James Reese Europe Orchestra (before his untimely death in 1919) were producing blues inspired improvisational art that had a potential consumer market. In 1923 the group, featuring Armstrong made their first recordings including *Chimes Blues*.

The Tin Pan Alley composers were not the only white American artists fascinated with the relatively new Black American folk music, the performing arts, and the cultural behaviors associated with them. Zora Neal Hurston called them “Negrotarians.” They included Paul Whiteman, *Porgy and Bess* writers George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, as well as New York Times music critic and period mainstay, Carl Van Vechten. They believed they understood the mores and folkways of African-Americans in Harlem. They became enamored with black performing, visual and literary arts and artists and attempted to contribute to the period’s canon. Van Vechten often arranged parties to facilitate a network of support by introducing artists to influential politicians, foreign visitors, and wealthy financiers. He befriended African-American conservative

39. W. Christopher Handy, “The Heart of the Blues,” *Etude Music Magazine* (March, 1940): 152, 193-94.

cultural critic George Schuyler, even though he (Schuyler) had a contrary view regarding the period's arts. Van Vechten, too, shifted from a consumer and facilitator to a producer when he penned the novel *Nigger Heaven*. Van Vechten created various characters whom he thought were indicative of those he encountered in the Harlem community. David Levering Lewis viewed the white patron's fascination with black arts as a binary phenomenon. Lewis said: "They came in an almost infinite variety. There were 'Negrotarians' who were earnest humanitarians, and those who were merely fascinated." Lewis comments further, "By the time *Nigger Heaven* was released by Knopf, in August 1926, Van Vechten ('Carlo' in the inner circle) had become Harlem's most enthusiastic and ubiquitous Nordic."⁴⁰ *Nigger Heaven* and *Porgy* were two of the period's more famous works of art created by whites. However, the desire for black artists recording black music was increasingly coming to the forefront. The movement toward Black Nationalism in the music business began less than ten years after Booker Washington's death and fifty years before *Motown Records* with the aforementioned formation of *Black Swan Records*.

In 1923 Joe "King" Oliver and his band traveled to Indiana and recorded seven songs. It was Armstrong's first experience as a recording musician. More importantly, his improvised solo on *Chimes Blues* gives the listener a glimpse into the artistry that was to impact blues and jazz music. The song is written in what was by then a standard twelve measure chorus with Oliver playing the melody or lead on the first five with the chimes leading the sixth one. Armstrong's improvised solo on the seventh and eighth choruses begins a series of musical ideas fraught with the patience of a seasoned veteran, not a

40. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 182.

twenty-three- year-old transplant from New Orleans. Immediately, his rhythmic choices are played uniquely with an element of individuality that was at the heart of blues music. Armstrong's choices are reminiscent of the music's earlier performance style. Amiri Baraka notes the music's importance: "Primitive blues had been almost a conscious expression of the Negro's *individuality* (Baraka's italics) and equally important, his *separateness*."⁴¹ Armstrong's improvisational instincts helped inspire a focus on the blues and jazz musician's individual contributions in an ensemble setting.

The blues music described as "classic" by Baraka was not the only performing art receiving attention in the dominant culture. Indeed, the "primitive blues" was increasing in popularity in the South. Performing artists such as "Big" Bill Broomsley, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Peatty Wheatstraw, and Charlie Patton earned attention in solo settings. Their popularity rose as they performed in traveling black minstrel and tent shows, playing "primitive" or early blues music. Baraka describes the phenomenon: "For the first time Negro music was heard on a wider scale throughout the country, and began to exert a tremendous influence on the mainstream of American entertainment world..."

Comparatively, Ethel Waters earned success recording Tin Pan Alley songs with such superb voice quality that inspired others to follow suit. The major recording companies seized the opportunity to cash in on the popularity of blues influenced music by dedicating a significant effort in marketing the American folk music.

Much of blues music's success can be attributed to the consumer's affinity to identify with the lyrics and the development of an aesthetic or affinity for the performing art. Researcher Theodore W. Adorno surmised that the genre's popularity existed because

41. Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, 86.

of a familiarity with the standardization or constant musical form (AABA) present in the majority of the music consumed in America. Adorno argued that, “the whole structure of popular music is standardized, even where the attempt is made to circumvent standardization.”⁴² Adorno then explained the impact on the consumer: “This inexorable device guarantees that regardless of what aberrations occur, the hit will lead back to the same familiar experience and nothing fundamentally novel will be introduced.”⁴³ New Orleanian and gospel music icon Mahalia Jackson discussed the cultural importance the music had on her as a child: “Everybody was buying phonographs---the kind you wound up on the side by hand---just the way people have television sets today---and everybody had records of all the Negro blues singers---Bessie Smith...Ma Rainey...Mamie Smith...all the rest. You couldn’t help but hear the blues.”⁴³ The popularity of blues music was ascending to its zenith before the stock market crash of 1929, and collaborations are helping fuel the ascent.⁴⁵

By 1925, Bessie Smith was considered one of the most influential and popular blues artists in America. Her live concerts were consistently sold-out, including outdoor picnics, tent revivals, lounges, and concert hall venues. Curiously, Pace and Handy thought her vocal style was too edgy and some of her lyrics too risqué and chose not to sign her to a recording contract with *Black Swan Records*. However, the more financially

42. Theodore W. Adorno, “On Popular Music,” *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 4th ed., John Storey, ed. (Harlow England: Pearson Longman, 2009), 63-74.

43. Ibid., 63.

44. Mahalia Jackson, *Movin On Up* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), 29.

45. W. C. Handy letter to Arthur Neale, February 1929, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

able executives at *Columbia Records* were willing to embrace her vocal style and signed her to a contract. However, the company needed help marketing their catalog of black music or “race records.” According to Armstrong’s biographer Terry Teachout, *Columbia Records* recruited Armstrong to accompany many of the label’s blues artists including Smith:

Shortly after Armstrong’s Roseland debut, Henderson had introduced him to Frank Walker, the head of Columbia’s race-record division, and Walker began using him to backup blues singers....he cut several dozen blues sides in 1924 and 1925, many of which show him off to excellent advantage---but he also played for Bessie Smith who had been recently dubbed the ‘Empress of the Blues’ by the *Chicago Defender*.... The best known of them is a stately ‘St. Louis Blues.’⁴⁶

The two giants of blues music were not personable to each other and recorded four sides together; *St. Louis Blues*, *Reckless Blues*, *Sobbin Heart Blues*, and *Cold In Hand Blues*.

Their playing styles revealed an artistic schism that was hard to overcome. Armstrong was touring and receiving accolades with his Hot Five and Hot Seven groups. He was thus accustomed to the traditional New Orleans jazz approach to recorded blues productions. His musical aggregations included the traditional wind instruments’ (cornet or trumpet, clarinet, and trombone) polyphony with established musical roles.

Specifically, while performing blues music, each musician exchanges roles with regards to the melody, accompaniment, and soloist.⁴⁷ Indeed, he perfected his accompanying instincts during his experiences as Joe “King” Oliver’s second cornetist. Smith’s popularity and musical reputation were also critically acclaimed. She was accustomed to

46. Teachout, *Pops*, 90.

47. See the discussion regarding musical roles in a traditional New Orleans Jazz ensemble in Chapter I.

expressing the blues instinctively as the lead in an ensemble setting. Notably, Smith wrote many of the songs she performed and recorded.

Smith's collaboration with Armstrong on W.C. Handy's classic, *St. Louis Blues*, begins with a single introductory chord. The distinctive timbre that made her one of the more seminal blues vocalists of the period is immediately evident when the first chorus begins (see Figure 6). Armstrong instinctively responds to each of Smith's musical statements with an attempt to fill every space with sound and with no regard for note count. Fred Longshaw accompanied the two on an obscure mouth organ called a harmonica.

St. Louis Blues
(First Chorus)

W.C. Handy
Transcribed By
Michael Deceir

The musical score is presented in four systems, each containing a vocal line for Bessie Smith and a piano accompaniment for Louis Armstrong. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/D-flat minor) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 1-4) shows Smith singing 'I hate to see the evening sun go down' and Armstrong providing a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the vocal line with 'I hate to see the evening sun go down'. The third system (measures 9-12) shows Smith singing 'It makes me think of my last go round' and Armstrong providing a rhythmic accompaniment. The fourth system (measures 13-16) shows Armstrong's piano accompaniment for the final four measures of the first chorus.

Figure 6. The first chorus of Bessie Smith's rendition of *St. Louis Blues*, accompanied by Louis Armstrong

The instrument has the timbre of a church organ and but is played like a harmonica. Smith's legato and melodious offerings are contrasted with Armstrong's responses as he assumes the customary supportive musical role of the clarinetist in the traditional brass band setting. Indeed, it is Armstrong's responsorial choices in the second chorus that are reminiscent of not only what he heard in New Orleans, but also his recent recordings with clarinetists Sidney Bechet and Johnny Dodds, with the Clarence Williams Blue Five and King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, respectively. Smith sang four choruses and the form was AABA. The composition uses the twelve bar blues framework with a bridge section followed by a return to the melody, with a predictable final cadence.

An analysis of Armstrong's choices in the second chorus reveals improvisational choices of a musician steeped in the jazz tradition of call and response. Specifically, Smith sings the melody as is traditionally done in settings such as this and the space created between phrases gives Armstrong the opportunity to respond. Handy described this practice of blues music productions when the lead artist (Smith) instinctively expects a response, and typically, Armstrong responds musically. Indeed, Handy believes creative instances such as the Armstrong-Smith collaboration are examples of two specific elements in African-American music:

The first of these is a marked insistent syncopation. The second is the novel element of filling in breaks. The Negro becomes impatient with silences, and fills in the rests-spaces with impromptu embellishments of his own. He slips in an 'OH Lawdy!' before the next regular beat is due. These natural improvisations are the foundations of Jazz...The grandson of the old gang worker who put in a simple 'Oh Lawdy' fills in with virtuosity on the saxophone; but both are expressing the identical racial instinct in a typically racial way.⁴⁸

48. W. C. Handy, "The Heart of the Blues," *Etude Music Magazine*, March 1940, 152, 193-94.

Indeed, Smith's musical offerings are short, thematic, melodic phrases, separated into antecedent and consequential statements. Armstrong occupies the spaces between each statement cleverly, with varying incomplete and complete musical ideas. He understands that he is in a trio setting, and his supportive musical role is similar to a clarinetist's role in the New Orleans traditional brass band setting. To this end, his responses are sensitive and contrast Smith's statements with the usual robust ornamentations common in New Orleans brass band music.⁴⁹

The art of improvisation, which includes avoiding redundancy and not repeating ideas, is at the heart of jazz music and is the aquifer for this and all of Armstrong's musical endeavors. Subsequently, in *St. Louis Blues*, Armstrong is both audacious and sensitive. In the final chorus, Armstrong recreates the approach he used during his stint with Joe "King" Oliver when he briefly abandons the responding role and harmonizes the melody with Smith. His decision to do so is bold when one considers the fact that it would have been safer to play in unison with the session's leader. He chose to avoid the redundancy. Armstrong's mastery of blues music in an improvisational setting is evident when he then departs from his adventurous harmonization and returns to the traditional style of ornamentation.

Blues music and its subsequent trajectory in popularity continued in the 1920s and beyond despite the fact that many black leaders believed it reminded them of the oppressive South and an environment they sought to escape. Still, others believed the music was not worthy of scholarly attention and thus not an accurate cultural representation for mainstream America, particularly during the post-World War I years.

49. See measures one through eleven in Figure 6.

Activist, orator, vocalist, attorney, and stage actor Paul Robeson discusses the paradox regarding the performance of spirituals: “Throughout the country with few exceptions, I found a contrary condition to be true. I found a special eagerness among the younger and, I am sorry to say, the more intelligent Negroes, to dismiss the spiritual as something beneath their new pride in their race.”⁵⁰ However, period researcher Leonard Diepeveen thought that though just as important, folktales too did not receive acceptance: “Indeed as with spirituals, ‘rediscovery may be too strong a word to apply to folktales,’ for they had never disappeared as a popular oral art form. However, until the Harlem Renaissance they had not received the sort of official sanction that the black press gave spirituals.”⁵¹ Houston Baker, Jr., surmises that the genre was difficult to comprehend because it did not earn the necessary attention from the elite: “The task of adequately describing the blues is equivalent to the labor of describing a world class athlete’s awesome gymnastics. Adequate appreciation demands comprehensive attention.”⁵² Indeed, the black American folk music’s prominence in American culture was increasing, and African-American leaders found it difficult to ignore.

Blue music’s place in the psyche of upward mobile blacks was often uncomfortable. Period literary artist and theorist James Weldon Johnson explores the question of “high art” versus “low art.” He explains the inclinations of many in academia to dismiss the proclivities of folk music, particularly ragtime, the precursor to blues

50. Paul Robeson, “Paul Robeson and Negro Music,” Interview, *New York Times*, April 5, 1931, 81.

51. Leonard Diepeveen, “Folktales in the Harlem Renaissance,” *American Literature* 58, no. 1 (March 5, 1986): 64.

52. Houston Baker Jr., *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 4.

music: “But this has been the course of scholasticism in every branch of art. Whatever new thing the people like is pooh-poohed; whatever is popular is regarded as not worth while”⁵³[sic]. David Levering Lewis argues, “Afro-American music had always been a source of embarrassment to the Afro-American elite. The group continued to be more than a little annoyed by the singing of spirituals long after James Weldon Johnson, and Alain Locke had proclaimed them America’s most precious, beautiful, and original musical expression.”⁵⁴ Beyond the music, some black leaders chose to embrace class distinctions within their race based on pigmentation. The differences went beyond the darker-skinned members of their community. According to E. Franklin Frazier, pride in the group’s upward mobile accomplishments evolved into a superiority complex: “Not only has the distinction of blood given certain Negro groups a feeling of superiority over but it has made them feel superior to ‘poor whites.’ The Negro’s feeling of superiority to ‘poor whites’ who do not bear in their veins ‘aristocratic’ blood has always created a barrier to any real sympathy between the two classes.”⁵⁵ Samuel Floyd Jr. believes it was, “The demythicizing of black culture, together with the increasing separation of blacks from rural America, resulted in new tensions for African Americans who were seeking new roots and comforts.”⁵⁶ However, some of the period’s literary artists, particularly

53. James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), 13.

54. Ibid., 173.

55. Edward Franklin Frazier, *La Bourgeoisie Noir*, *Modern Quarterly* (1928): 78.

56. Samuel Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 89.

Langston Hughes, Zora Neal Hurston, and Sterling Brown embraced rather than ignored reminders of life in the south.⁵⁷

The communal approach to music making and the aesthetic reaction to the African-American performing art in a sacred setting described by Johnson, are similar to the experiences for many of the period's literary artists. Such was the case with Langston Hughes, who was one of the era's most celebrated literary artists. Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, and showed evidence of advanced literary skills as early as his elementary school years. He caught the attention of Jesse Fausset, the literary editor for *The Crisis*, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's prestigious publication. Hughes recognized the importance of the blues music in the African-American culture and in 1925 he wrote one of the period's seminal works, *Weary Blues*. In 1926 he published a poem dedicated to W.E.B. Du Bois titled, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*.⁵⁸ The composition earned the first place prize from *Opportunity Magazine's* literary contest. Indeed, by the mid-nineteen twenties, many of Harlem's residents were transplants from the south that relocated to the north to escape the Jim Crow oppression and to gain employment. David Levering Lewis believed that "for the first time something of the soul of the black migrant had combined with the heart and spirit of a superior poet."⁵⁹ Indeed, *Weary Blues* captures the experience from the perspective of a receiver hearing a performance of blues music. Specifically, the

57. Langston Hughes' essay *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, Zora Neal Hurston's *Mules and Men*, and Sterling Brown's *Memphis Blues* are examples of racial pride in the period's literature.

58. See Lewis's discussion in *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, of Hughes's inspiration for writing *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, 279-80.

59. *Ibid.*, 114.

performing art's inspiration (which is apparent in the text of many of the blues songs) is evident to the antagonist in Hughes's poem as the music induces empathy, a resulting aftermath, and a diagnosis:

The Weary Blues

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune
 Rocking hard back and forth to a mellow croon,
 I heard a Negro play.
 Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
 By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
 He did a lazy sway...
 He did a lazy sway...
 To the tune o' those Weary Blues...
 With his ebony hands on each ivory key
 He made that poor piano moan with a melody
 O' Blues!
 Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
 He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
 Sweet Blues!
 Coming from a black man's soul.
 O' Blues!
 In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone.
 I heard that Negro sing that old piano moan---
 "Ain't got nobody in all this world,
 Ain't got nobody but myself,
 And put my troubles on the shelf."
 Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
 He played a few chords then played some more---
 "I got the Weary Blues
 And I can't be satisfied.
 Got the Weary Blues
 And can't be satisfied---
 I ain't happy no mo'
 I wish that I died."
 And far into the night he crooned that tune.
 The stars went out and so did the moon.
 The singer stopped playing and went to bed
 While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
 He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

Hughes's recollection, in poetic terms, of a blues music performance, reinforces the genre as a functional art. To this end, the performer uses the music to make him or her feel better. Consequently, the act affirms the cultural tradition of African-Americans' use of the performing art for a melancholy relief.⁶⁰ This sentiment is reflected in lines thirty-eight and thirty-nine: "While the Weary Blues echoed through his head. He slept like a rock or a man's dead."⁶¹ Hughes's poetic reflection of an aesthetically satisfying experience as the receiver or observer of the performing art, speaks to the popularity of the music. The act of receiving or consuming art (incidentally on Lenox Avenue in Harlem) which suggests a familiar textual setting serves as a conduit to the satisfaction of knowing that others share the same or similar challenges (infidelity, economics, impending death) and their solutions.

Acknowledging or recognizing the sources of troubles in one's life is consistent in most of the music's themes, thus making the performing art therapeutic. Lines nineteen through twenty-two in *The Weary Blues* reflect an acknowledgment of one's troubles and a solution. "Ain't got nobody in all this world, Ain't got nobody but myself, I's gwine to quit ma frownin And put my troubles on the shelf." Indeed, Hughes often used the same modus operandi when writing poetry with blues music as its theme. For example, his 1926 creation, *Blues Fantasy* is imitative of the blues musician's practice of expressing a vehicle for ridding oneself of a problem, then ending with the desired result. Lines twenty-four through twenty-six are an example of this compositional technique:

60. Frederick Douglas in *My Bondage and My Freedom* discussed in detail the practice of enslaved who sang to make themselves feel better as well as conveyed messages of planned escapes through songs.

61. See the text to *Weary Blues* referred to in this chapter.

I got a railroad ticket,
 Pack my trunk and ride
 Sing' em sister!
 Got a railroad ticket,
 Pack my trunk and ride.
 And when I get on the train
 I'll cast my blues aside.

In typical blues music fashion, Hughes states and re-states the situation before giving the solution or desired closure.⁶² Instinctively, the reader gets a sense of rhythm and flow similar to hearing a blues song when reading *Weary Blues* and *Blues Fantasy*. Hughes researcher W.K. Tkweme surmises,

...African American music, its beauty, cultural meanings, and creative representations of the people, was absolutely central to Langston Hughes's artistic project. His poetry and fiction return again and again to the figure of the black musician and scenes of music-making; his characters express themselves through traditional songs and song forms, and he pioneered in adapting the twelve-bar blues form to the printed page.⁶³

Cultural critic Thomas Dewey theorized that the consumer "must...create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent."⁶⁴ Hughes contemporary, Sterling Brown's ode to iconic blues music pioneer, Ma Rainey, confirms Dewey's theory.⁶⁵ The third stanza codifies the perspective of the art's receiver:

O Ma Rainey,
 Sing yo song;
 Now yous back

62. Note the practice in recordings such as *St. Louis Blues* referred to earlier in this chapter.

63. W.S. Tkweme, "Blues in Stereo: The Texts of Langston Hughes in Jazz Music," *African American Review* 42, no.3/4 (Fall-Winter 2008): 503.

64. Thomas Dewey, *Art as Experience*. 60.

65. *The Collected Poems of Sterling Brown*, ed. Michael Harper (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1980), 62.

Whah you belong,
 Git way inside us,
 Keep us strong...
 O Ma Rainey,
 Lil' an low;
 Sing us 'bout de hard luck
 Roun' our do';
 Sing us bout de lonesome road
 We mus' go...

Houston Baker Jr. describes Brown's decision to abandon a Eurocentric model for the poetic verse as such:

A college bred man like Sterling Brown, standing as a member of a second (or even third) twentieth century Afro-American intellectual generation, could readily set himself of knowing the score where the folk national (blues) voice was concerned. The inroads on myths and shibboleths, nonsense and exclusion, made by a first (and perhaps second) generation ensured Brown the necessary emotional and intellectual confidence to mine a southern Afro-American tradition with dedicated genius.⁶⁶

Biographer Joanne V. Gabbin discusses Brown's homage to the blues music great:

"Brown skillfully brings together the ballad and blues forms and, demonstrating his inventive genius, creates the blues-ballad."⁶⁷

Historically, many blues musicians did not migrate to urban areas but chose to remain in the South. Those who remained served as a source for writers and researchers exploring the cultural impact as well as the nuances of the genre, and its early performing practices. To this end, early blues music progenitors, Charlie Patton, "Blind" Lemon Jefferson and T-Bone Walker are three that became prominent artists during the first

66. Houston Baker Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 92.

67. Joanne V. Gabbin, *Sterling Brown: Building the Black Aesthetic Tradition* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1985), 157.

three decades of the twentieth century.⁶⁸ Other seminal artists include “Big” Bill Broonzy, “Leadbelly” Ledbetter and Robert Johnson who were prominent during the years Zora Neal Hurston researched and documented the music, mores, and folkways associated with southern African-American culture. In 1935, period literary artist Zora Neal Hurston published a sociological study of the music and the folkways associated with it in *Mules and Men*. Similarly, anthropologist and musicologist Alan Lomax focused much of his ethnomusicological research of Southern African-American folk music by often recording the folk music in its rural setting.

Major recording companies such as *Vocallion* and *Okeh* took advantage of the existence of a market for consumers who identified with the Southern black folk music and were willing to use disposable funds to satisfy an aesthetic. Though many of the genre’s notable artists chose to remain in the South and perform their art as itinerant musicians, the behaviors and aesthetic satisfaction associated with the function of the music were not lost on the recently migrated urban African-Americans. According to Amiri Baraka, “The South was *home*. It was the place Negroes knew, and given the natural attachment of man to land, even loved.”⁶⁹ Theoretically, the fictional musician Hughes describes in *The Weary Blues* is perhaps an itinerant artist who may be in a rural venue or at one of Harlem’s notorious rent parties or perhaps in a cabaret setting. The

68. The artists noted here and in the next sentence were but a few who signed recording contracts and assigned to the “race record” division.

69. *Ibid.*, 105.

point is, the artist satisfies a black aesthetic through a collective association with the song's texts, resulting in a melancholy relief.⁷⁰

From the recording industry's perspective, the folk music whose roots are in the spirituals, work songs, and sacred worship songs was rapidly becoming the most popular genre in America, and there was an opportunity to market these ethnic-specific recordings to a diverse group of consumers. The record companies previously mentioned, began recording and selling blues music as a part of a separate division called "race records." The recording industry tried to capture the performer's or insider's perspective (to the satisfaction of the consumers) of the music as functional art. The opportunity presented itself in hundreds of blues music songs. Southern itinerant blues artist, Lemon Henry "Blind Lemon" Jefferson's 1925 composition, *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean* is an excellent example of such a compositional technique.⁷¹

Just one kind favor I ask of you
 One kind favor I ask of you
 One kind favor, I ask of you
 See that my grave is kept clean
 See that my grave is kept clean

In *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean*, Jefferson is contemplating the inevitability of his death. The artist is concerned with his post-life legacy, and whether or not he has lived a life worthy of significant remembrance. To this end, Jefferson makes a specific request that his friends periodically clean his grave, ensuring his immortality. Subsequently, the

70. Hosting a party at one's apartment and charging an entrance fee was a popular way to raise monies necessary to pay the rent. Documentation of such parties is widely published in works such as David Levering Lewis's *When Harlem Was in Vogue, 198-239* and George Schuyler's *The Negro Art-Hokum*, 96.

71. Lemon Henry "Blind Lemon" Jefferson, recorded October 1927 for *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean* in 1927 for Paramount Recording Company. 78 rpm.

song becomes therapeutic and functional when it is used in a performance setting and gives the producer and the receiver an expected melancholy relief. Inevitably, the genre, just as the music of the African enslaved, as well as the sacred lyrics identified by Mahalia Jackson, became a functional art.⁷² Cultural theorist Samuel Floyd, Jr., discussed the reciprocity apparent when some hear black music: “With the musical experience, the expectation is that something musical will happen in the playing of music, and it is the *something* that fascinates, that elevates the expectation and places the hearer in a critical mode.”⁷³ Hence, the performing art as therapy is nothing new.⁷⁴

There is evidence that humans used the arts for reasons beyond aesthetic values for tens of thousands of years. In some cases, instruments that may have been tools of musical expression became conduits for disseminating messages. When the enslaved Africans were coming to grips with the reality of the loss of freedom, they expressed their unhappiness in music and received a melancholy relief. The use of music as a functional art continued when the enslaved cleverly used melodic texts to covertly inform each other of planned escapes while keeping a suspicious overseer at bay. They used code words like “ain’t gonna study war no more” or “steal away, steal away... I ain’t got long to stay here.” To those who are outside of the experience, it may have meant a speedy summons

72. New Orleans native Mahalia Jackson recounts her childhood experiences including a melancholy relief from hearing Bessie Smith, sacred worship music and early jazz in her memoir *Movin On Up*, 29. Jackson, like Armstrong combined the proclivities of each genre and created their respective performance art.

73. Samuel A. Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa To The United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 97.

74. See John Blacking Jr.’s *How Musical Is Man?* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1973), 3-31.

to heaven. To others, it meant contemplation of an escape to the north. In some instances, the texts of these songs served as a double entendre similar to risqué lyrics of some early blues music.⁷⁵

In summary, the music inspired Langston Hughes, Zora Neal Hurston, and Sterling Brown and period literary artists to capture through texts the receiver's relationship with the performing art.⁷⁶ In the context of Dewey's theory, blues music consumers bring a degree of familiarity and expectations to performances. The result is a trajectory in popularity that is reflected in record sales. To this end, Louis Armstrong became one of the genre's most prolific artists. His contributions were significant both as a vocalist and instrumentalist. Armstrong has an extensive body of work as an accompanist on one hundred fourteen recordings for dozens of blues artists. Additionally, his artistry was on display in dozens of recordings as a leader. Indeed, blues music assumed the role of functional art from its earliest performances. The performing art's uniqueness is recognizable when one analyses the enslaved's musically transmitted coded messages. The music functions therapeutically when a solo artist gains a melancholy relief from the purview of his or her surroundings, which was usually absent of an audience. When performed in the presence of a consuming public, the music elicits empathy and generates feelings of hope that come with identifying solutions. Indeed, the genre originated from a simple functional art such as work songs created with the purpose

75. Many narratives of the enslaved such as Frederick Douglass' *My Bondage and My Freedom* discuss the use of texts to secretly communicate plans of escape. The practice known as double entendre continued in the creation of blues music.

76. *My Handy Man* sung by Alberta Hunter is a great example of the use of double entendre. Though the words are about a man who works around the house, they could be interpreted as a request for sexual favors.

of making tasks easier. In each case, the art was designed to empower both the producer and the consumer with coping mechanisms and/or solutions to their collective or personal social ills.

CHAPTER V
LOUIS ARMSTRONG, THE NEW NEGRO PHILOSOPHY, AND BLUES MUSIC
IN AMERICAN CULTURE

By 1923, when the Harlem Renaissance was in its infancy, Louis Armstrong's improvisational and creative talents were gaining attention from his contemporaries and consumers of jazz and blues music include people buying the records as well as those attending live performances. Armstrong began inspiring a shift in American music aesthetics as early as 1919 when he was disseminating his art on river boat excursions from New Orleans to Iowa. By 1924, when blues music was beginning its climb in popularity, Armstrong's ability and contributions were no longer apocryphal. Recordings such as *Texas Moaner Blues*, *Black and Blue*, and *West End Blues* are but three of his artistic works that became a salient part of American music lexicon and the period considered in this study. It is of significant note that in *West End Blues*, Armstrong improvised an introductory fanfare that extended the common range of the trumpet while juxtaposing a Euro-centric musical jargon with a blues closure. By 1928, he was foremost in helping transform the landscape of American vocal music. Indeed, his career continued for an additional forty years beyond the demise of the Harlem Renaissance. The designating or labeling of artistic periods is done more often than not in a historical context. The beginnings of the cultural movement as well as the *New Negro* sentiment

can be traced to essays and protests that appeared decades before the Harlem Renaissance.¹ It is telling that by the beginning of World War I, African-American leaders found themselves debating their level, if any, of participation in the American war effort.² Interestingly, the exhibition of bravery by African-American soldiers in all the previous wars, even when faced with constitutional restraints, was not enough to exercise any leverage. However, because of the consistent onslaught of racist propaganda initially designed to maintain the institution of slavery and later to justify Jim Crow laws, black leaders found themselves arguing for inclusion in the military with government officials blinded by an American culture that still saw African Americans as lazy, cowardly, and intellectually lacking any leadership capabilities. Consequently, a cultural paradox existed when the folk music of black Americans began an upward trajectory in American popular music as African Americans were again displaying bravery in military conflicts abroad and a renewed collective demand for freedom at home under the guise of the *New Negro*.³ W.E.B. Du Bois in his 1926 speech *The Criteria of Negro Art* and Alain Locke in his publication *The New Negro* expressed both pride and concern regarding the direction of African-American arts while Louis Armstrong became one of America's

1. Ida Barnett Wells's campaign against lynching and terrorism is an excellent example of resistance to status quo. Her publication, *The Truth About Lynching* is an excellent example of her desire to expose to the world the incidents and accusations of interracial sex as the prime factors inspiring violence against blacks.

2. Some leaders thought that volunteering for the war would confirm a sense patriotism, guaranteeing much sought after civil freedoms. Others felt that because of the mistreatment of black veterans in places like Houston, African-Americans should not participate in the war effort.

3. W.E.B. Du Bois among others expressed the frustrations of many returning black veterans with the inability to enjoy the same freedom they fought to ensure in Europe. His poem *Returning Soldiers* is an example of the "New Negro" decision to respond in kind to acts of terrorism.

major progenitors (through over one hundred recordings as a sideman and thousands of live performances) of its artistic contributions to the world of blues, and jazz music.

Fantasies of civil rewards after participating in the war were born out of an incessant idea that continued acts of bravery in military battle would finally guarantee freedom. Despite the relatively recent heroics of African-American soldiers during the Spanish-American War, some in the War Department still believed it was foolhardy to include African-Americans in the war effort. Founder Joseph W. Holley and the entire male faculty and staff of the Albany Bible and Manual Training Institute in Albany, Georgia volunteered for service.⁴ Curiously, some of the detractors knew of the all-black Ninth and Tenth Cavalries' heroics under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young. Indeed, Young and his African-American unit's military exploitations in the Mexican-American War and the war with Spain in Cuba were contributions to the *New Negro* sentiment.

Pancho Villa was an enemy to the governments of Mexico and the United States, and the insurrectionist was the subject of an intense pursuit, and Young's bravery played a large part in Villa's demise. Villa sought to overthrow the Mexican government by involving American military forces in a border war. The year was 1916, and the Ninth and Tenth Cavalries surrounded approximately one hundred fifty of Villa's revolutionaries and under cover of machine gun fire, the all-black Buffalo Soldiers killed and scattered their combatants. It was the first time the American military used the new

4. See Joseph W. Holley's autobiography, *You Can't Build a Chimney from The Bottom Up* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1948), 51

weapon in war.⁵ The defiant courage of the soldiers who refused to accept lower class status after risking their lives fighting a war to guarantee freedoms for other groups is also indicative of the *New Negro* attitude. Black soldiers seeking the chance of full participation saw their wishes dashed when they were denied infantry status and relegated to menial duty after the United States entered the European war in 1917.⁶ Researcher Lieutenant Michael Manning discusses the issue: “Despite their outstanding service in Mexico and their long record of brave performance in previous wars, the four black regiments did not receive orders to Europe after declaration of war because many senior and political leaders still believed that African-Americans lacked the intelligence, courage, and dedication to serve in sustained combat roles.”⁷ The bravery of the Buffalo Soldiers was not lost on period literary artist James Weldon Johnson when he wrote *The Color Sergeant*. David Levering Lewis describes the inspiration as “a comment on the historic patriotism of African Americans and the historic ingratitude shown them by white Americans.”⁸

The year 1919 began with promise as New York City honored the returning all-black Fifteenth Regiment from their stellar and decorated tour in France. The regiment known as the Hell Fighters was the only unit to be awarded the Croix de Guerre and

5. The heroics of African-American soldiers are chronicled in Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Michael Lee Lanning’s publication, *The African-American Soldier: From Crispus Attucks to Colin Powell* (New York: Kensington Publishing Company, 2004), 129-48.

6. W.E.B. Du Bois biographer, David Levering Lewis discussed the dilemma, particularly Du Bois’s attitude regarding the matter in *W.E.B. Du Bois Biography of a Race 1868-1919* (New York: Owl Books, 1993), 454-57.

7. Ibid., 137.

8. David Levering Lewis, Introduction to “James Weldon Johnson,” *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 279.

because of the bravery and gallantry, it was chosen to lead the march to the Rhine. The unit, which was a part of the Ninety-Third Division, was reorganized into 369th, 370th, 371st and 372nd regiments. According to Manning the American military decision makers were in a dilemma: “because the division contained no service or support units, American commanders were at a loss as to how to employ the black regiments until the French, in desperate need for fresh troops, requested assignments of the regiments of the Ninety Third Division into their army.”⁹ The division displayed an extraordinary amount of bravery after General John Pershing granted the French government’s request for the Harlem-based regiment. According to Lanning,

All four regiments performed well in combat, with the 369th leading the way by earning the Croix de guerre for their gallantry at Maison-en-Champagne. The 369th, formed the fifteenth New York, became known as the “Men of Bronze” to the French and as ‘Hell Fighters’ to their German opponents. In addition to their unit recognition, one hundred seventy one officers and men of the regiment received individual awards of the Croix de Guerre or the Legion of Merit.¹⁰

The men had the distinction of spending more time on the front lines than any other American regiment, lost none to prisoners of war, and did not surrender any territory to the enemy. However, General Pershing and other members of the military brass appeared content with using the Harlem-based regiment as mere laborers. Bigotry and prejudice were evident when Army officials warned the French government of perceived problems that were in fact contrary to their actual fighting record. Despite the gallantry displayed in all previous wars, accusations of cowardice and lack of intellect were leveled by American officers. Ironically, France, as well as Germany and Italy had successfully used

9. Ibid., 137.

10. Ibid., 139.

natives of Algeria, Abyssinia, Somalia, South Africa, and Nigeria who were victims of the colonization established at the Berlin Conference of 1883 to defend their colonial conquests.¹¹

Conductor and composer James Reese Europe led Harlem's 369th unit's band. Years earlier Europe was an integral part of Jazz's cultural influence in New York as he and his musical aggregations successfully infused Ragtime, Blues, into American popular music.¹² Paradoxically, Louis Armstrong and other migrating New Orleans jazz musicians (Joe Oliver, Freddie Keppard, Sidney Bechet and "Jelly Roll" Morton among others) were harnessing improvisational techniques (heretofore an underused in western art) foreign to the European and American orchestral medium. Indeed it was the orchestral setting or medium that allowed Europe to incorporate his compositions and arrangements of traditional songs such as W.C. Handy's *St. Louis Blues*. Moreover, Europe's traveling orchestra capitalized on their association with the famous Castles (dancers) who in turn introduced the African-American musical aggregation to a broader audience not available to Keppard, Oliver, Bechet, Armstrong or any of the early progenitors of America's new music. Du Bois biographer David Levering Lewis discusses the band's triumph as a part of the Hell Fighters:

Big Jim Europe's band, its instruments bought through a tin can millionaire's generosity, conquered French, Belgium and British audiences as utterly as his regiment overwhelmed Germans in battle, leaving crowds delighted and critics mystified by the wah-wah of the 'talking trumpet.' (So much so that

11. Ibid.

12. See video documentarian Ken Burn's *Jazz: Episode Two: The Gift*.

when the proud skilled musicians of France's Garde Republicaine failed to reproduce these unique sounds, suspicious experts examined one of Europe's horns for some hidden valve or chamber).¹³

Lewis further notes the heroic excitement that the parades generated. According to Lewis, "Colonel Hayward and Lieutenant Europe (the sole African-American officer) were objects of special attention by the crowds, but the hero of the moment was a coal dealer from Albany, Sergeant Henry Johnson, the first American to win Croix de Guerre (star with palm) gleamed from the sergeant's tunic as he stood waving graciously, in the open limousine provided by the city."¹⁴ Europe extolled the virtues of America's new music, its uniqueness, and the way it helped develop racial pride. In 1919 months before his death, Lieutenant Europe discussed the African-American and nationalistic musical approach and the creative instincts involved: "The negro loves anything that is peculiar in music and this 'jazzing' appeals to him strongly."¹⁵ He further explains the band's popularity in France and their unique musical approach to the performing art:

We won France by playing music which was ours and not a pale imitation of others, and if we are to develop in America we must develop along our own lines. Our musicians do their best work when using negro material. Will Marion Cook, William Tyers, even Harry Burleigh and Coleridge Taylor are only truly themselves in the music which expresses their race.¹⁶

The city of New York decided to on Europe and returning black American war veterans. On February 17, 1919 the city staged a ticker-tape parade from Manhattan north to Harlem. Lewis describes the city's show of appreciation for the "only unit of war

13. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 3.

14. Ibid., 3-24.

15. James Reese Europe, "A Negro Explains Jazz," *Literary Digest* (April 26, 1919): 28-9.

16. Ibid., 28-9.

allowed to fly a state flag, the only American unit awarded the Croix de Guerre, and, as the French High Command's supreme mark of honor, the regiment chosen among the allied forces to lead the march to the Rhine."¹⁷ The musicians Europe listed in his discussion all went on to become contributors to the performing arts during the period considered here. Cook and Tyers were his assistants and performed a triumphant post-war concert tour in several European cities. Burleigh became a noted collector and progenitor of African-American spirituals. Taylor was to become one of the twentieth century's outstanding composers.¹⁸

Subsequently, racial pride surged after the summer of 1919, and it manifested itself in urban areas that were experiencing an upsurge in black citizens who were relocating from the South to cities like Chicago, Detroit, and New York, particularly the north Manhattan neighborhood, Harlem. Du Bois called Harlem home, as did the headquarters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People which evolved from the Niagara Movement. Harlem was also the home of The Urban League as well as some of the largest African-American churches in the nation. According to author Amy Helene Kirschke, "Harlem was a city within a city, one of the most beautiful and healthy sections of the city, with its own churches, social and civic centers, shops, theaters and other places of amusements. It contained more Negroes per square miles than any other place on earth, beginning on 125th Street and covering twenty five solid

17. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 4.

18. See Eileen Southern's discussion of the musicians in *The Music of Black Americans* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), 357-58.

blocks.”¹⁹ NAACP executive secretary James Weldon Johnson described Harlem as a “Negro metropolis, the mecca for the sightseer, the pleasure seeker, the curious, the adventurous, the enterprising, the ambitious, and the talented of the Negro world.”²⁰

The post-war optimism that was a part of the *New Negro* sentiment was high as Du Bois spearheaded the first Pan-African Congress in Paris, pursuant to President Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen point peace plan which included the “right to self-determination.”²¹ Du Bois and other delegates, particularly those from Africa, saw the proclamation as the beginning of the end of decades-long colonialism. However, the atmosphere of celebration in New York as World War I ended was short-lived as the chief terrorist organization in America, the Ku Klux Klan, increased its murderous acts of lynching black Americans; and the summer of 1919 witnessed some of the worst race riots in American history. David Levering Lewis describes the atmosphere: “The year 1919 was less than seven weeks old when the 369th Infantry Regiment marched proudly up Fifth Avenue. By the end of 1919, there had been race riots in two dozen cities, towns, or counties, rampant lynchings [sic], and resurrection of the Klu Klux Klan, and a dismal falling off of jobs in the North for Afro-Americans.”²² Consequently, fantasies of African Americans finally being accepted as equals in America with civil liberties dissipated as the soldiers returned to Jim Crow settings unmoved by any acts of patriotism by the

19. Amy Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 1995), 23.

20. James Weldon Johnson, “The Making of Harlem,” *Survey Graphic Magazine* (March, 1925): 635.

21. Woodrow Wilson published his fourteen-point plan for peace in 1918. Specifically, number V addresses the desire for the post-war peoples’ right to self-determination.

22. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 23.

descendants of African slaves. The irony of fighting for freedom and democracy on foreign soil and not having the opportunity to enjoy liberty along with their families and communities was unacceptable for most. Du Bois succinctly captures the sentiment:

The faults of our country are our faults. Under similar circumstances, we would fight again. But by the God of heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that the war is over we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land. We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for democracy! We saved it in France, and by the great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.²³

Blacks across America began retaliating against terrorist attacks, and the growing sentiment of fighting back and defending their communities increased. Lewis comments further,

The Red Summer and its aftermath forged a different leadership, however. Washington D.C. and Chicago had shown how little fear of white men there was among demobilized Afro-American soldiers or peasants who had braved the unknown of migration. Now from the lips of virtually every spokesman and the pages of every publication there was suddenly not only a bold new rhetoric----there was a ‘New Negro.’²⁴

Violence inspired by racial tensions did not escape historian Carter G. Woodson who narrowly escaped death when he happened upon the beating of some blacks at the hands of a mob in Washington DC. If not for the courage of two white women who recognized the gravity of the situation and who hid Woodson with their bodies in the doorway of a storefront, he too may have been killed or injured by the mob.²⁵

23. W.E.B. Du Bois, “Returning Soldiers,” *Crisis Magazine* (1919): 14.

24. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 24.

25. *Ibid.*, 19.

African-American war veterans recognized the hypocrisy of fighting for democracy in Europe and returning to a nation that not only condoned Jim Crow laws and racial apartheid but refused to acknowledge and address the terrorist act of lynching. After proving their bravery and patriotism in yet another war, they and their communities were still denied access to the rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and delayed their pursuit of happiness. The peace agreement imposed on Germany at Versailles, France resulted in a period of neo-Nationalism in Eastern Europe which led to new geographical/political boundaries creating such new nations such as Yugoslavia and Hungary. Indeed, a few years later, returning German WWI veteran, Adolph Hitler used the Treaty of Versailles as inspiration to correct what he thought as unfair treatment of the German nation and initiated a second war based on the fascist theory of Aryan superiority.²⁶

Simultaneously, members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People were growing increasingly restless and impatient with the constant terrorist attacks against returning soldiers and blacks who resisted Jim Crow customs. They turned to their secretary, who was born with a complexion so devoid of pigmentation, he was often mistaken for being Caucasian. Walter White had convinced Du Bois and others in the organization that the best way to expose the atrocities is to investigate the crimes in a clandestine fashion and report the findings in the organization's monthly publication, *The Crisis*. Biographer Thomas Dyja explains the inherent danger: "A black man caught passing in order to spy on whites would be

26. Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 694.

lynched himself.”²⁷ White’s bravery made him a key figure in the period’s political and artistic activism. According to Dyja, “He didn’t so much enter the scene that February 1918 as he exploded, initiating nine years of non-stop work that placed him near the center of every sphere of black political, social, and artistic life in the 1920s.”²⁸ White’s spirit of activism, (though at times placed him at odds with Du Bois, after the latter’s return to the NAACP) was important to the period. It served as an inspiration for his novel, *Fire on the Flint*.

In a 1925 full page advertisement, in the *Survey Graphic Magazine*, the NAACP boasted of its and White’s nine-year efforts to end lynching. Among several points of reference, the publication cites the passage of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. The legislation was passed by the House of Representatives but did not receive enough votes in the Senate. To gain anti-lynching legislation, White had recounted to members of Congress his experiences researching terrorist attacks on blacks in the South. Missouri Representative Leonidas Dyer was impressed and authored the Dyer anti-lynching bill. After convincing Dyer of the legislation’s necessity, White returned to the South and investigated the lynching of Mary Turner and subsequent murder of her unborn child in Lowndes County, Georgia.²⁹ He later presented press credentials and secured an audience with Georgia Governor Hugh Dorsey, an anti-lynching supporter, who told White that he was, in fact, powerless to stop the murders. Unfortunately, Southern Democratic senators,

27. Thomas Dyja, *Walter White: The Dilemma of Black Identity in America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008), 46.

28. Ibid., 48.

29. Mary Turner was kidnapped and lynched by a mob. Turner was pregnant and the trauma of the violent act induced the delivery of a fetus that was subsequently beaten. Diya discussed the incident in *Walter White: The Dilemma of Black Leadership* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008), 51-2.

through a filibuster maneuver, blocked passage of Dyer's bill.³⁰ The frustrations of African-American leaders were exacerbated by the fact that the filibuster was juxtaposed with the United States government's paying of reparations to foreign countries' whose nationals were lynched. In 1905 James Elbert Cutler discussed the American terrorist conundrum as such: "It is a peculiar situation when the United States can thus be called upon to pay indemnities for lynchings [sic] and yet cannot take steps in several States to prevent their occurrence and cannot in any way hold State governments responsible."³¹

Subsequently, the *New Negro* reaction inspired a sense of resistance and determination to defend black lives, a view reflected in works of many of the period's artists. Claude McKay captured the sentiment in his work *If We Must Die*. David Levering Lewis surmises that *If We Must Die* gave African Americans a virtual catechism with which to confront the terrible Red Summer of 1919."³² In lines 12-14, McKay describes the courage, determination, and decision to resist violence at all costs:

What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!³³

Notwithstanding the ramifications of racial violence born out the determination of African Americans to defend their communities with the same fervor displayed in the European war theater, Louis Armstrong was gallantly sharing his unique improvisational

30. Ibid.

31. James Elbert Cutler, *Lynch-Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in The United States* (New York: Longmans, Green, And Co., 1905), 260.

32. David Levering Lewis, *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 289.

33. Ibid.

art with thousands who heard him while employed on a riverboat sailing the Mississippi River from New Orleans to Davenport, Iowa. Thus his prowess as a jazz and blues musician earned him notoriety beyond his hometown as hundreds would flock to hear the musical approach of his and the boat's band (led by fellow New Orleans musician Fate Marable). For most listeners, it was an introduction into blues music, traditional jazz, and modern dance music, played by the young but seasoned Armstrong. For Armstrong, it was an opportunity to expand his musical vocabulary and the craft of reading music, beyond what he learned in New Orleans at the Colored Waifs Home some eight years earlier. Armstrong explains, "But I wanted to do more than fake music all the time because there is more to music than playing one style. I lost no time in joining the orchestra on the *Sidney*."³⁴ Although Armstrong and others may not have been consciously participating in the social revolution that was the summer of 1919, he was like the itinerant blues artists, spreading a relatively revolutionary musical approach and expounding an American folk-art. Indeed, lessons taught to Armstrong by Spanish-American War Veteran Captain Joseph Jones are indicative of the *New Negro* sentiment. Researcher George Kay surmises, "It was Captain Jones who first taught Louis to blow the bugle." Kay explains further, "But Louis received much more than a musical education at the Waifs' Home. Under the kind parental guidance of Joseph Jones he acquired a personal dignity and strength of character that remained with him throughout his life."³⁵ His experiences with Captain and Mrs. Jones, as well as bandmaster Peter

34. Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 182.

35. George W. Kay, Foreword, "Louis Armstrong's Letter to His Daddy" *The Second Line, Bicentennial Issue*, 1976, 13-14.

Davis, certainly helped forge his mental makeup and approach to life. Virtues such as trustworthiness, good citizenship, and honesty were engrained in young Armstrong and reinforced at home by his mother May Ann.

One need only to look at the reaction to the rise of the first African-American heavyweight boxing champion, Jack Johnson, to see vestiges of the *New Negro* spirit and attitude. Indeed, Black-Americans viewed the showdown between Johnson and Jefferies as an opportunity to finally prove their worth in America beyond manual labor. Most were either cognizant of Dr. Charles Caldwell's 1835 theory that Blacks are closer on the chain of evolution to apes and monkeys as opposed to Cro-Magnon man, or suffered from a lack of social or educational standing because of that belief system. The theory of African or racial inferiority became a mainstay in academia for well into the twentieth century. Dr. Caldwell and others postulated that blacks indeed did not possess an intellectual capability equal to whites thus enslavement and manual labor were not only justified but necessary.³⁶ Locke describes the apparent new attitude among many Black Americans: "...because The Old Negro had long become more of a myth than a man. The Old Negro we must remember, was a creature of moral debate and historical controversy."³⁷ Locke successfully captures the growing sentiment among African-Americans that their worth as citizens and contributors to the American fabric has been proven over and over again. The explosion of artistic activity, the nation's refusal to pass anti-terrorist legislation, as well as an increased awareness of the Africa's contribution to world history, helped inspire many to advocate for a change the methodology heretofore

36. Dr. Charles Caldwell, *Introductory Address on Independence of Intellect*, 1825, 11.

37. *Ibid.*, 631.

used attain social justice. The summer 1919 race riots was a clear indicator that there was indeed a new order.

The New Negro sentiment was evident in the first African-American heavy weight boxing champion. Relatedly, in Jack Johnson's case, he not only retained his championship belt but also further infuriated many in the public by flaunting his Caucasian wife, fueling a violent reaction and vehement rejection by those who simplified the race problem to a question of race and sex. The white fears affirmed their notion that if left unchecked, black men will fulfill their ultimate goal and or desire to be sexually involved with white women and because they lack basic social instincts or norms, American society, and civility will disappear along with the white race because of amalgamation.³⁸ Johnson's actions verified, in their opinion, this bigoted sentiment. Subsequently, to counteract and minimize Johnson's accomplishment, writers espoused the idea that African-American athletic prowess was the result of some "God-given" ability coming naturally without the necessity of developing one's craft. This argument made it easier for many whites to accept Johnson's accomplishments as well as segregated amateur and professional competitions (made legal by the 1896 *Plessey v Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling) and minimize the possibility of any intellectual capability associated with their physical abilities.

The reaction by many whites to the *New Negro* spirit was often violent. A young Louis Armstrong experienced such reaction during the days after the boxer Jack Johnson became the first black heavyweight champion; an event that proved seminal in the

38. Mark Bauerlein's *Negrophobia: A Race Riot in Atlanta 1906* (San Francisco: Encounter Books 2001), 3-132 is an excellent discussion of the racist atmosphere based on gender and sex bigotry that led to the Atlanta riots of 1906.

movement's history. To the chagrin of many whites, Johnson soundly defeated the out-matched Jefferies, knocking him out in the fifteenth round. Many observers thought Johnson, who battered and verbally taunted Jefferies and his corner, could have ended the fight much earlier. In the days following the fight, many White Americans retaliated by committing acts of terrorism against black citizens who displayed any racial pride and satisfaction with the fight's outcome. In some cases, they randomly murdered blacks who were merely going about their daily lives. New Orleans and young Louis Armstrong did not escape the tense atmosphere when he was forced to hide as a gang of whites attacked and beat several blacks. Biographer Thomas Brothers notes, "Johnson's victory caused white rioting throughout the country and New Orleans was no exception. Armstrong remember hiding in his house while gangs wandered through the neighborhood in search of random targets on whom to release their rage. Such was the New Orleans into Louis was born."³⁹ Armstrong recalls,

That day I was going to get my supply of papers from Charlie, who employed a good many of colored boys like myself. On Canal Street I saw a crowd of colored boys running like mad toward me. I asked one of them what happened. 'You better get started, black boy,' he said breathlessly as he started to pull me along. 'Jack Johnson just knocked out Jim Jefferies. The white boys are sore about it and they are going to take it out on us.' He did not have to do any urging. I lit out and passed the other boys in a flash. I was a fast runner and when the other boys reached our neighborhood I was at home looking calmly out the window. The next day the excitement had blown over.⁴⁰

The violence Armstrong was nearly subjected to was indicative of the mob violence and terrorist acts that anti-lynching proponents Ida B. Wells and later Walter White investigated.

39. Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*, 14-15.

40. Armstrong, *Satchmo*, 36.

In separate spheres, jazz and blues music was coming of age in New Orleans when Wells began exposing the terrorist acts after personal friends of hers were murdered in Memphis. She found that the excuse, usually the accusations of a sexual assault against white women by black men were lies. According to researcher Mia Ba, “Wells’ suspicions were confirmed when she began researching every lynching that she read about. What happened in Memphis was not unusual, she found: fully two thirds of victims of lynch mobs were never even accused of rape.”⁴¹ Wells’s actions as an agent of change continued into the early decades of the twentieth century as she is as much indicative of the *New Negro* spirit as any. She actively defended black soldiers who were falsely accused post-war crimes, participated in the Niagara Movement which was the precursor to the NAACP and one of a few African-American women in the suffrage movement.

The violence and terrorist attacks by many whites were inspired by a more than century old deliberate dissemination of misinformation about the inhumane system of enslaving Africans. Many, including well-meaning abolitionists believed that even though the system was indeed cruel, the subjects were forcefully removed from a homeland that was underdeveloped, devoid of any organized religious order, has no written history, and its inhabitants exist with mores or folkways that encourage uncivilized behaviors. In their opinion, the absence of the desire and or an ability to do the necessary things (study, practice, and research) was genetic with African-

41. Mia Bay, Forward to *The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-Lynching Crusader*, Ida B. Wells, ed. Mia Bay, Gen Ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

Americans.⁴² They chose to ignore the fact that W.E.B. Du Bois had already published his landmark group of essays, *The Souls of Black Folk*; George W. Carver was on the cusp of revolutionizing farming technology in the South, and a new American music called jazz was developing in New Orleans. It was unfathomable that an art form which incidentally incorporated elements from West Africa, the Caribbean islands, and Europe could come from the creative minds of Charles “Buddy” Bolden, John Robicheaux and other New Orleans African-American performing artists.⁴³ Ironically, the transition of this music to the American psyche was made easy because of nearly seventy years of minstrelsy. This early American music genre dehumanized African-Americans even when the art of music making was the subject matter. In 1925, Locke acknowledges the changes as such,

By shedding the old chrysalis of the Negro problem, we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation. Until recently, lacking self-understanding, we have been almost as much of a problem to ourselves as we still are to others. But the decade that found us with a problem has left us with a task. The multitude perhaps feels as yet only a strange relief and a new vague urge, but the thinking few know that in the reaction the vital inner grip of prejudice has been broken.⁴⁴

Indeed, the arts movement that is the Harlem Renaissance was as Locke describes, “a spiritual emancipation.” The period’s artists were aware of minstrelsy’s stereotypes and they creatively attempted to contrast those heretofore artistic norms in their respective mediums.

42. See James C. King’s *The Biology of Race* (Los Angeles: University of California Press 1981), 71-8.

43. See Marquis’s, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 29-39.

44. Alain Locke, *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke in *The New Negro* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1925), 5.

In 1918 Du Bois organized the second Pan-African Conference in London partly because of the steady decline in race relations (including increasing terrorist attacks), the treatment of returning black soldiers, and an increasing association and correlation with a disregard for the problems of people of color throughout the world. He recognized that the shortcomings in the American and European educational system regarding non-western history, particularly Africa's contribution to world history, and that was a contributing factor to continued European colonization. Woodson, Arnold Schomburg and later John Henrik Clarke all recognized the inherent problem with an education system that does not acknowledge the contributions to history from a significant segment of the population it is supposedly serving. Du Bois was keenly aware of Woodson's research. Du Bois, on the other hand, published a number of essays assailing America's race problem such as *The Souls of Black Folks* and *The Souls of White Folks* in which he outlined the economic disadvantage of low wages or cheap labor present in western nations as well as colonized areas around the world. Deeper still was his argument that historical Africa was the foundation for the greatness of Europe. According to biographer David Levering Lewis, "Conceding the superiority of European cultural achievements to 'any culture that arose in Asia or Africa,' Du Bois discounted Europeans as the reason for these achievements."⁴⁵ Lewis's sentiments accurately reflect Du Bois's attitude toward colonialism and wage disparity expressed though the remaining decades of his life.

While Harlem was in its infancy as the hotbed for the black American cultural revolution that was to be the Harlem Renaissance, Louis Armstrong was in Chicago,

45. David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2000), 15.

earning a reputation as an extraordinary cornetist from New Orleans playing blues music in a traditional jazz band medium. Earlier, he was one of the music's foremost progenitors playing and improvising on a riverboat that sailed from New Orleans north to Davenport, Iowa. His relatively brief career as a riverboat musician was a conduit for many to experience first-hand, the performing art that was becoming one of the nation's most popular music. Recognition of jazz music as an art form was chiefly because of Armstrong's improvisational explorations which were simultaneously being consumed while post-war America was attempting define and appropriate (Tin Pan Alley music, Race Records) African-American performing arts in an atmosphere of heightened resistance to terrorism and disregard for human and constitutional rights. By 1923, when blues music was a permanent fixture in American culture, Edward "Duke" Ellington, Jelly Roll Morton, and Sidney Bechet had few if any equals. Bechet was to become the genre's most recorded instrumentalist. Significantly, all the artists listed are from New Orleans, except Ellington who, like Carter G. Woodson, was from Washington, DC.⁴⁶

Harlem Renaissance artists, like the jazz and blues music pioneers from New Orleans, faced creative impediments to their productions of art representative of black America and Du Bois thought it was necessary for art to serve as propaganda for the good of the Black community.⁴⁷ Indeed he openly questioned and challenged the role of white critics who serve to define thus deciding what is good or bad in Black American culture. He understood the inherent and apparent pitfalls when one culture sets standards and parameters for another culture regarding what is right or wrong. The decision whether or

46. See Southern's *The Music of Black Americans*, 365-403.

47. See Du Bois's 1926 speech, *The Criteria of Negro Art*, 15.

not to follow creative instincts or adhere to patron/benefactor aesthetics was often difficult to make. When discussing the situation with African-American artists Locke acknowledges the problem:

His shadow, so to speak has been more real to him than his personality. Through having had to appeal from the unjust stereotypes of his oppressors and traducers to those of his liberators, friends and benefactors he has had to subscribe to the traditional positions from which his case has been viewed. Little true social or self-understanding has or could come from such a situation.⁴⁸

Locke's assessment capsulate the inherent dilemma of black artists, a dilemma Armstrong overcame.

Armstrong seems to have ignored any attempts (if indeed there were any) to interfere with his artistic development as his career rose steadily, and his 1920 arrival in Chicago for what turned out to be a two-year engagement with King Oliver's band proved to be simultaneously a learning ground and an impetus for improvisational explorations. The immediate and collective musical improvisation in a traditional New Orleans jazz ensemble was on display nightly at Chicago venues like the Vendome. The act of creating music spontaneously made blues and jazz music art forms. King Oliver became not only his mentor and father-figure but also a musical guru transforming Armstrong into his protégé. The group's augmented instrumentation (unusual because of an additional cornet) allowed for Armstrong to explore the expansion of the traditional roles established in the wind instruments of an early New Orleans Jazz Ensemble. Armstrong's deep admiration for Oliver, both personally and musically, allowed for nightly musical creations which reached new heights in the context of the New Orleans

48. Nathan W. Huggins, "Visual Arts: To Celebrate Blackness," *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 47.

brass band style of collective improvisation. Specifically, nightly, Armstrong would assume the role of the clarinetist (embellish the melody) in a traditional brass band setting when he musically responded to Oliver's improvisational ventures.⁴⁹ His familiarity with the blues, juxtaposed with a degree of technical ability which included being able to play notes C and D (sometimes fifty times consecutively) above the normal range of the trumpet, made him an instant hit in Chicago.⁵⁰

In 1923, Oliver's group traveled to Indiana to make their first phonograph recording. Armstrong's improvised solo on *Chime's Blues* gave the world a glimpse into the future of jazz, particularly the genre's focus shifting from the ensemble to the creative talents of a single artist. His choices displayed a rhythmic "swing" that was to become imitated in a variety of American musical genres for the rest of the twentieth century. Armstrong's swing is his invention, and an outgrowth of all the traditional jazz heard as he was coming of age in New Orleans, including Freddie Keppard, "Big Eyed" Louis Nelson and Bunk Johnson among others. His improvisational choices in *Chimes Blues* (a twelve-bar blues song) are indicative of a seasoned musician who understands the blues music and the role(s) of the accompanying instruments.⁵¹ His choices during the first eight measures not only makes for a standard antecedent-consequence but also a melodic flow that is swinging and concludes on the tonic and progressing into a concluding chord progression in the blues tradition. Indeed, the solo's chief attraction is its coherency.

49. The musical role of the clarinetist in early New Orleans jazz is explored by Sidney Bechet in his autobiography, *Treat It Gentle*, 77-94.

50. See Teachout's biography, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, 51-79.

51. The 1923 recording session that included *Chime Blues* was Armstrong's first studio experience.

Locke thought the period's literary, visual, and performing arts were the result of a necessity to embrace a relatively new atmosphere of unfettered artistic freedom: "It was rather the necessity for fuller, truer self-expression, the realization of the unwisdom [sic] of allowing social discrimination to segregate him mentally. And a counter attitude to cramp and fetter his own living----and so the 'spite-wall' that the intellectuals built over the color line has happily been taken down."⁵² Armstrong's improvisational art was the height of fuller, truer self-expression that inspired the oppressor to imitate the oppressed.

Perhaps Locke is expressing the conscious or sub-conscious reaction by the music's early pioneers to the appropriation of their music and sometimes demeaning imitations which reminded them of minstrel shows. Those who controlled the information began calling Paul Whiteman the "King of Jazz" and looking to the "Tin Pan Alley" composers such as George Gershwin as the real American proponents of this music. It should be noted that Whiteman never considered himself as such and looked to Fletcher Henderson (the creator of the "big band" instrumental aggregation) as the genre's real king.⁵³

The *New Negro* sentiment was present in many of the educational institutions in the African American community and Louis Armstrong benefited from such training. Schools such as Fisk College, Albany Bible and Manual Training Institute, and Clark College among others were producing teachers, musicians, artists, nurses, medical and dental school candidates. Evidence of the infinite possibilities and verification of Dubois'

52. Ibid., 632.

53. See Episode Three, *Our Language, Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns*.

philosophy was present on Washington's creation, Tuskegee Institute. Tuskegee professor and former slave, George Washington Carver, was exploring the possibilities available in southern peanut, soy and cotton crops. He and his students' curiosity produced hundreds of ways of uses including soy products, paint, axle grease, genetic research, and a massage oil which proved helpful to those stricken with polio. Carver's philosophy of no excuses, clean living, and diligence, mirrored his employer, Booker T. Washington. The fruits of his research are to this very day enjoyed the world over. Institutions such as Tuskegee and The Albany Bible and Manual Institute promoted racial pride and no-excuses while striving for excellence. The Colored Waif's Home for Boys where Armstrong received early institutional discipline was no exception. Educators were for the most part graduates of segregated colleges and universities or "Historically Black Colleges and Universities."⁵⁴ Armstrong's teachers were graduates of New Orleans Straight School (a teacher training institute) which is now Dillard University. Researcher Will Buckingham noted that the school's vocal music teacher, Naomi Spriggins (an alumnus of New Orleans Straight School) as the one "who gave Louis Armstrong his first 'singing lessons' during his stint at the Colored Waif's Home."⁵⁵

The period visual artists were cognizant of the *New Negro* attitude and fervor. In separate camps and various mediums, Aaron Douglas, Archibald Motley Jr., Paul Vander Zee, and Meta Warrick-Fuller painted, photographed and carved vestiges of black life, and cultural behavior. Motley Jr.'s work, *The Blues*, captures on canvas a crowded

54. Dr. Joseph Holley detailed the challenges of recruiting qualified teachers in rural Georgia in his autobiography, *You Can't Build a Chimney from the Top*, 53-80.

55. Will Buckingham, "Louis Armstrong and the Waif's Home," *The Jazz Archivist*, XXIV (2011): 7.

dance floor described by Duke Ellington in his composition *Don't Get Around Much Anymore* or Fats Waller's *This Joint Is Jumping*.⁵⁶ Both pieces define party venues that were commonplace in Harlem with crowds that are indicative of a nightly party atmosphere. Warrick-Fuller continued to produce work through the sculptor medium that captured the seriousness of black Harlem life, through subjects who were devoid of smiles. *Ethiopia Awakening* and *Dark Hero* were two of her more famous works. Paul Van Der Zee's photography gives the viewer a sense of the depth of the neighborhood's upper and middle class. However, Aaron Douglas's visual artworks capture the area's mood, and resulting cultural behaviors. It also codifies an inspiration apparent in some artists to similarly express the aesthetics of the cultural behaviors in a literary medium.

Collaborations between some visual and literary artists took place at the behest of publications such as the *Survey Graphic*, *Crisis*, and *Opportunity Magazines*. For example, Aaron Douglas was inspired to illustrate after reading a poem by Georgia Johnson called *The Black Runner*. His illustration depicts the efforts of a half-clad runner in full stride. Amy Kirschke discusses Douglas's disappointment with the work despite Johnson's approval: "Douglas originally thought his work was 'pretty good' but then became dissatisfied with it. He was surprised when Johnson wrote him thanking for the drawing."⁵⁷ The party life in Harlem was an indelible part of the artist's choices. For example, *To Midnight Nan at Leroy*,⁵⁷ is an illustration of two people enjoying each other

56. The texts of Ellington's *Don't Get Around Much Anymore* and Waller's *This Joint Is Jumping* vividly describe a "speak easy" dance and lounge venue common in the Harlem community during the era considered here.

57. Amy Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race and the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 1995), 71.

through the medium of dance, fueled by the jazz music in a night club setting. His interest in the visual arts produced in ancient Africa-inspired *Invincible Music, the Spirit of Africa*. Kirschke surmises, “Here Egypt represents Africa. Douglas was trying to simplify the human form. Two shield like marquis shapes are implanted in the ground behind the figure, with jagged design on them that resembles African-inspired patterning.”⁵⁸ Former Douglas student, and twentieth century artist, Dr. Arthur Berry, discusses Douglas’s ability to recognize the creativity in his contemporaries such as Pablo Picasso: “The other thing was, I said to him was that stuff about back then, Picasso paintings and so forth and how he was the master, he (Douglass) could see everybody else, he could look at his (Picasso) paintings and see he used the work of many other artists.”⁵⁹ Douglas’s choice to embrace African-American themes in his creations placed him in the canon of the period’s visual artists. Critics who argue the validity of the Harlem Renaissance visual arts readily point to Douglas’s art as an example of an embracing of African American culture. To the contrary, Louis Armstrong’s stage presence and demeanor were to become a source of division between those who recognized the genius in his art and those who viewed him (despite the sophistication of his music) as a reminder of nineteenth-century minstrel caricatures.

Images in the performing, literary and visual arts mediums often ignited the debate regarding the purpose of the period’s arts. To this end, the militancy inspired by the *New Negro* sentiments served as a double-edged sword as many were forced to look inward when contemplating theirs and other African American cultural contributions.

58. Ibid., 76.

59. Dr. Arthur Berry interview by author, Albany, GA, 10/22/2012.

Earlier in the century Paul Lawrence Dunbar chose to use slave dialect as a means to gain acceptance from a wider audience. He expressed disappointment with the fact that the demand for his dialect-based poems did not allow him to create more works in Standard English. Researcher Charles Johnson discussed Dunbar's dilemma at a conference organized to explore the uniqueness of the Harlem Renaissance: "But in his candid moments, Dunbar confessed to Johnson (James Weldon Johnson) that he resorted to dialect verse to gain a hearing and then nothing but his dialect verse would be accepted. He never got to the things he really wanted to do."⁶⁰ Dunbar's struggle is not unlike other artists who despite new art, the consumer insists on old art.

Similarly and by choice, Armstrong's stage presence was an integral part of his performing art.⁶¹ He successfully traversed the dynamic between artist and consumer by making many who may otherwise oppress him feel a level of comfort as a receiver and accepting of his art. Whether with the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra in New York or the King Oliver Creole Band in Chicago, Armstrong's art pushed the genre from an ensemble-focused aggregation concerned primarily with a collective group effort to an emphasis upon the individual soloist. Unlike Dunbar, he was readily free to create the art of his choice through virtuosic instrumental performance and vocal means.

However, to many, Armstrong's stage mannerisms were a throwback to minstrel stage caricatures. His stage presence personified a musician that was happy to share his art. Unfortunately, it was reminiscent of some racist stereotypes perpetuated in American

60. Charles Johnson, "The Negro Renaissance and its Significance," *The New Negro Thirty Years Afterward* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1955), 208.

61. Much of the criticism of Armstrong was of his stage presence that reminded many of minstrel characters that predominated American culture during the previous century.

music on the nineteenth-century minstrel stage.⁶² Specifically, approximately one hundred years before the Harlem Renaissance, American actor Thomas D. Rice encountered an enslaved stable hand in Kentucky who, like many others, produced art that functioned as a vehicle to help get a laborious task done as well as gain a melancholy relief. Rice, from an outsider's perspective, attempted to recreate the laborer's functional art in the context of a concert stage. He called his caricature "Jim Crow" which was the name of the song he heard being sung by the laborer. Subsequently, Rice and other "Ethiopian Delineators" perpetuated the false image of the enslaved as happy laborers. Frederick Douglass discusses the premise of a happy slave: "The remark is not unfrequently made, that slaves are the most contented and happy laborers in the world. They dance and sing, and make all manner of joyful noises---so they do; but it is a great mistake to suppose them happy because they sing."⁶³ Armstrong's ever-present smile on stage reminded some of the Rice's and others' black-faced stage creations, or at the least, variations of those caricatures.

However, Armstrong's stage demeanor successfully made his listeners relaxed as they anticipated the pleasure of being entertained. His stage presence (greeting and smiling before and after improvisational expressions) forced many to consider (or in some cases reconsider) the humanity of a people who possessed the propensity to create such an art. The receiver unconsciously discards what social scientist Joy DeGruy-Leary

62. See Ken Burns' Documentary, *Jazz: Episode Three, Our Language*. Musicologists discuss the misgivings many black musicians and consumers had with Armstrong's stage presence.

63. Eileen Southern, *Readings in Black American Music*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1983), 84.

calls a “cognitive dissonance.”⁶⁴ The human instinct Dr. Leary identified arises when one becomes aware of and empathizes with a group suffering mistreatments such as lynching, terrorism, or genocide. Some choose to rectify the existence of such treatment by ridding themselves of “cognitive dissonance.” Degruy-Leary believes the process of dehumanization is used as a coping method for the uncomfortable instinct or “cognitive dissonance” that arises upon an awareness of acts of inhumanity: “Humans do not particularly like this discomfort so whenever it occurs we almost immediately try to resolve it. And we can resolve it in one of two ways. One way is to own up to the negative act and address the harm caused by it. The other way is to justify the negative act rather than admit to the wrong doing. ‘They deserve it,’ is a typical justification”⁶⁵ Degruy-Leary’s theory forced many who consumed blues and jazz music to assess (or reassess) their personal prejudices pertaining to the people that created the music. In other instances, the music inspired a resistance to tyranny and fascism.

One of the consequences of Armstrong’s and American jazz’s European tour was the inspiration to organize the underground anti-Nazi movement.⁶⁶ French freedom fighters organized clandestine intimate jazz performances after Nazi forces occupied Western Europe, and banned the music. To this end, Armstrong and other touring American jazz artists may have inspired some concert-goers to regain their “cognitive dissonance.” Armstrong’s and other’s audiences more than likely were familiar with the

64. Joy Degruy-Leary, *The Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* (Milwaukie, Oregon: Uptone Press, 2005), 54.

65. *Ibid.*, 54.

66. Stefan Grapelli, jazz musician and member of the Anti-Nazi French Resistance Movement described the group’s inspiration for resisting Nazi fascism from the music of Louis Armstrong.

violence perpetrated from African enslavement and colonialism on the African continent. Additionally, the contributions of other period musicians such as Sidney Bechet, Duke Ellington, Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake and Will Marion Cook who successfully toured most of Europe, Turkey, and the Soviet Union should not be minimized. French writer and filmmaker Bertrand Tavernier surmises, “It (jazz) was a way of fighting against the conformists, fighting against the spirit of fascists, fighting against the German atmosphere. It was a symbol of resistance; not only because it was American, it was music created by blacks, and that was important when you are fighting against a racist government.”⁶⁷ Tavernier affirms the power of jazz (and its precursor, blues music) as a transformative and inspirational art that inspires an identical resistance to oppression by the victims of fascism in Europe and racism in America.

The period’s rise and fall were not proportionate. Though the rise in terms of quantity and popularity was relatively quick, the fall was even faster after 1930. The period may have depended too much on philanthropic cognitive dissonance and the continued consumption of blues music. Indeed, Harlem Renaissance’s rapid demise mirrors the nation’s economic downfall after the 1929 stock market crash. Benefactors became increasingly unable or unwilling to support not only American arts in general but also African-American period arts in particular. By the end of the new century’s third decade, blues music was indeed an integral entity in American pop culture.⁶⁸ Insiders and outsiders saturated the market with creations the latter considering themselves as

67. Bertrand Tavernier, *Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns* (Episode Seven, *Dedicated to Chaos*, Alexandria, VA: 2000).

68. See Elijah Wald’s *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: Harper Collins Books, 2004), 1-13.

legitimate artists and experts. Indeed, the canon of work produced by *Tin Pan Alley* songwriters such as George Gershwin and Irving Berlin were evident of the frenzy associated with the monies generated by the music's popularity. Another contributing factor was a propensity of some artists to record and re-record under pseudo names. One can see the evidence of this in a letter written by W.C. Handy to his client Arthur Neale explaining the reasons for declining revenues. In a 1929 (pre-stock market crash) correspondence to a frustrated Neale, Handy partially explains why the artist's blues song has not garnered success: "Everything we put out last year was a flop. It's not because they aren't good songs. It is because the game is becoming tighter and tighter each year, and a song is only what you are able to make it. Men can sit up over a bottle of liquor and a meal and cigar, and plan a dozen hits and put them over"⁶⁹ Handy expressed his and other black American blues artists' frustration with the or temerity of many who would sacrifice the quality and authenticity of the art to generate revenue.

The worldwide economic crisis following the 1929 stock market crash affected artists' careers in varying degrees. Consumer expectations and satisfaction allowed the artists to have a level of creativity and fiscal stability, even during the trying early years of depression. Zora Neal Hurston, for example, continued to research and publish in the fictional medium. Her stories (*Mules and Men*, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*) told of black life and the impact of music, in the rural south.⁷⁰ Meanwhile Armstrong and his

69. William Christopher Handy to Arthur Neale, February 12, 1919, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

70. Zora Neal Hurston's *Mules and Men* is a collection of folk tales and songs gathered from anthropological research in the South. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is one of the writer's seminal fictional works.

Hot Seven Orchestra made a triumphant tour of Europe. The tour included a concert in Holland that was audio and visually recorded. The audience in Holland, like all the other tour stops, experienced Armstrong's artistry and mastery of the American art form presented with the unique Armstrong style that makes the listener (via humbled presentation) so comfortable that the listener leaves with an acceptance of the humanity of Africans and African-Americans. What is of note here is that in the post-World War I and pre-World War II European context, listeners who heard Armstrong, Ellington, Bechet, and others would have been forced to challenge on one hand the moral and political validity of colonialism in Africa and other parts of the world. Additionally, the receivers of Armstrong's art may have been considering the humanity of African Americans and the humanity of those who were (at the time of Armstrong's tour) victims of the fascist ideologies of Adolph Hitler. Cultural theorist Frantz Fanon discussed the derogatory nomenclature created by colonizers to justify colonization and the process of redefining the oppressor's propaganda: "The colonized know all that and roar with laughter every time they hear themselves called an animal by the other. For they know they are not animals. And at the very moment when they discover their humanity, they begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory."⁷¹ Louis Armstrong discovered his humanity during his early years in New Orleans when he learned the tenants of discipline from school headmaster Captain Jones while learning to play music in an ensemble setting from teacher Peter Davis. Armstrong's sense of humanity, was also heightened when he learned more about the art of improvisation from Joe "King" Oliver among others. Those who heard him, whether performing on the riverboat in 1919 or in 1935

71. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 8.

before the outbreak of World War II, the result was the re-acquisition on their cognitive dissonance.

The period known as the Harlem Renaissance was relatively short in duration. However, it produced some of America's more significant literary, visual, and performing art forms and artists. David Levering Lewis reaches this conclusion about the period:

Although the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance seems much more sudden and dramatic in retrospect than the historic reality, its institutional elaboration was, in fact, relatively quick. Because so little fiction or poetry had been produced by African-Americans in the years prior to the Harlem Renaissance, the appearance of a dozen or more poets and novelists and essayists seem all the more striking and improbable.⁷²

The period's rise and fall did not happen in a vacuum as the political schism established decades earlier between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington inspired the philosophical split between George Schuyler and Langston Hughes. Schuyler argued in his essay *The Negro Art-Hokum* that period's black American art was not only of less quality but mere scant imitations of Euro-centric models. Langston Hughes countered Schuyler's theories in his essay *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* and became an advocate for African and African-American inspired art.⁷³ The writer embraced aspects of black life including blues music in much of his works.

Harlem Renaissance visual artists did not escape the debate as just as their literary and performing counterparts, they depended on philanthropic gifts to survive. Aaron Douglas,

72. David Levering Lewis, "The Intellectual Luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 7 (Spring, 1995): 68.

73. W.E.B. Du Bois' and Booker T. Washington's disagreement can be identified in DuBois's chapter in *Souls of Black Folks* titled *On Mr. Washington and Others*. In Schuyler's essay, he loathed the proclivities period's African-American art titled *The Negro Art-Hokum* was contradicted by Langston Hughes in his essay, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*.

Archibald Motley, Meta Warrick-Fuller and Romare Bearden often celebrated folk themes and aspects of Harlem life in a social realism context in their art.⁷⁴

Simultaneously, Louis Armstrong's career was on a meteoric rise between 1923 and 1930 and was producing art that was creatively responding to the political and philosophical schisms. Early hints of Armstrong's improvisational talents were on display in Chicago when the period begins, and his reputation as an excellent young artist preceded him as he arrived as a product of a New Orleans artistic culture built upon Africanisms, mores, and rituals that were evident in the blues and jazz music productions.⁷⁵ In 1930, as the Harlem Renaissance was drawing to a close, Armstrong along with his wife and "Hot Five" band member Lillian Armstrong, recorded with early country music icon, Jimmie Rodgers. Their rendition of Rogers's composition, *Yoddlle Blues No.9*, was a collaboration between two American music giants from different genres. Biographer Terry Teachout comments, "The accent may be that of a hillbilly from Mississippi, but the sensibility is straight out of Storyville, and Armstrong backs up Rodgers with the same down home fills he had supplied for Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey."⁷⁶ Armstrong and Rodgers embraced the uniqueness of the respective genres, including the elasticity available in a twelve bar blues song and Armstrong's refined improvisational skills.

74. Du Bois argued that black art should be created to agitate for change in his 1926 speech, *The Criteria for Negro Art*. On the other hand, Locke cautioned that the arts should acquiesce to Euro-centric parameters in order to be accepted.

75. See Thomas Brother's *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 197-218.

76. Terry Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, 150.

In summary, the interrelationships between the life and music of Louis Armstrong, the period known as the Harlem Renaissance, the popularity of blues music, and the philosophical and political admonitions of the period's major figures are tangible. In hindsight, what may appear as unrelated circumstances were, in reality, historical events that directly influenced the *New Negro* sentiment. Ida B. Wells's efforts to shed the light on terrorism to the world, Jack Johnson's prowess in the ring juxtaposed with his decision to break the taboo of interracial romantic relationships, and the reaction of many African-American WWI veterans to the maltreatment upon returning home from the war were contributions to the literary artistic choices at the dawn of the Harlem Renaissance.

Louis Armstrong's art and consequently the period's primary performing art was a direct result of the particular mores and folkways present in the culture of his birthplace, New Orleans. The significance here is that the region's earliest enslaved population consisted of native Senegambians. They introduced particular cultural behaviors which included a communal approach to making music, the use of poly-rhythms, and percussive body usage. Decades later, during the post-Civil War years, the Senegambians' descendants (as well as the descendants of those enslaved from other West African nations) used the same approach to making music when they fused blues and ragtime music. The music a young Armstrong heard and played (including the sacred music of the area's black churches) was in large part based on the music created by the same descendants. Blues and jazz music arose from the music of the post-enslavement African-Americans' aesthetic choices, specifically, field hollers and work songs. The subsequent art was functional as it was music that served to assist with various labor tasks. Similarly,

the enslaved created the performing art or spirituals, to covertly send messages of planned escapes to each other.

The performing art took a binary path. Many of the New Orleans musicians followed their lay brethren and migrated to urban areas in the North including Chicago and Harlem. Still, other blues musicians maintained their residency in suburban areas of the South and played the music to consuming audiences imitative of the art's earliest performance practices. Both groups of artists impacted the Harlem Renaissance and subsequently American music. The mostly southern blues musicians played music that maintained its folk traditions. They generally earned their livings as itinerant musicians, traveling extensively and sharing the performing art throughout the southeast. The invention of sound recording and the interest in the uniqueness of black American folk music inspired a growth in the art's popularity. The demand for individual artists in smaller ensemble settings increased though groups like Armstrong's Hot Five and the earlier Fletcher Henderson Orchestra which featured Louis Armstrong successfully performed blues music. Seminal blues music artists, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Ethel Waters all signed contracts in the "race record" division of recording companies. Armstrong's impact in this setting is significant. He recorded one hundred and fourteen times as a sideman with dozens of blues artists between 1923 and 1930.

Harlem Renaissance literary artists were not immune to the rise in blues music's popularity. The performing art considered here was the central theme of much of their works. For example, Langston Hughes captured blues music's impact on cultural behaviors in Harlem venues in poems such as *Weary Blues* and *Jazzonia*. In both works,

Hughes simultaneously romanticizes the music's power to recognize one's ills and the possible solution(s) available to them. Thus, blues music similarly functions as a liberating force just as its precursor did years in folk settings, such as cotton or sugar cane plantations, serving to help the sharecropper/artist cope with the aggregate amount of the tasks at hand. Period literary artist Fenton Johnson also captured in literary prose the impact of blues music in *The Banjo Player*. Similarly, Sterling Brown's penned an ode to blues music pioneer Ma Rainey with a poem title, Ma Rainey. Brown expressed in the context of Thomas Dewey's theory *Art as Experience*, the aesthetic value of hearing blues music from the receiver's perspective.

The importance and significance of blues music on American culture are apparent to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. On September 5, 1977, NASA launched the Voyager I satellite to probe interstellar space beyond earth's direct solar system. The organization placed particular items on board as a contingency in case the spacecraft encountered extra-terrestrials. NASA put representations of human experience on planet Earth on the rocket. Among those were examples of music, including a recording by 1920s itinerant blues musician, "Blind" Willie Johnson. The apocryphal story is that the artist was blinded as a child when his stepmother threw lye in his eyes in retaliation for being abused by Johnson's father. Johnson earned a modicum of success as his art, not unlike that of others in the blues genre, captured life's trials and tribulations. Johnson's music often describes the difficulty of navigating an existence in the Jim Crow South. He also recorded gospel songs or, more specifically, blues music with sacred texts. Sadly, he died penniless on a cold floor in his home after a fire heavily damaged it. The

song NASA chose was recorded fifty years earlier during the Harlem Renaissance and titled *Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Floor*.

The significance of NASA's decision to include black American folk music written during the Harlem Renaissance era is an example of the human experience is infinitely valuable. Performing artist Wynton Marsalis surmised, "To accept the music of the Negro is to accept the humanity of the Negro." Indeed, the period's contributors were not the first artists and activists to tell the story of black life in America. However, their artistic contributions and renewed sense of history inspired generations of artists and theorists throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Louis Armstrong lived for an additional forty years and contributed significantly to the American music canon. He altered the path of American music even in the face of prejudice and racism as his art still sets the standard for improvisation. In summary, the interrelationships between the life and music of Louis Armstrong, the period known as the Harlem Renaissance, the popularity of blues music, and the philosophical and political admonitions of the period's major figures are tangible. In hindsight, what may appear as unrelated circumstances were, in reality, historical events that directly influenced the New Negro philosophy, political thought, and the literary, visual and performing arts between 1923 and 1930, known as the Harlem Renaissance.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Louis Armstrong's artistic choices both instrumentally and vocally between 1923 and 1930 influenced the evolution of the Harlem Renaissance literary, visual, and performance arts. One can identify signs of artistic manifestations in his 1924 collaboration with Sidney Bechet, *Texas Moaner Blues*. It was, in fact, his second recording session. Indeed, an analysis of the music transcription of the ensemble's wind instruments (see Figure 2 in Chapter I) of the recording reveals two New Orleans musicians steeped in the blues tradition that both possess the performing instincts of seasoned blues music professionals. Notably, Armstrong's improvisational stop-time exploration suggests an early bebop style, though that genre was not on the scene for another sixteen years. He simultaneously mirrored earlier New Orleans jazz musicians while shifting the focus of the performing art to individual improvisational in the context of the blues music. His artistic choices were so impactful during the Harlem Renaissance that they permanently changed the landscape of American music throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. One can identify vestiges of the earlier West African musical practices decades earlier in Armstrong's place of birth, New Orleans' Congo Square. Similarly, musicians were expected to improvise in the context of the song. The mores and folkways present in New Orleans and during Armstrong's childhood and adolescent years inspired his musical instincts.

The rise in Armstrong's popularity as a performing artist parallels the trajectory of blues music's popularity from 1924 through 1930. However, critics of the Harlem Renaissance either did not recognize or underestimated Armstrong's contributions to the period and the subsequent impact on black American cultural pride during the period considered here. More often than not, their African-American and African-centric choices resulted in positive implications. The artists did not want to exist in alterity with the African diaspora. Activist Franz Fanon explains, "The blacks who lived in the United States, Latin, and Central America needed a cultural matrix to cling to."¹ Langston Hughes said black artists have a plethora of subjects available to them "Without going outside his race, and even among the better classes with their 'white' culture and conscious American manners, but still Negro enough to be different, there is sufficient matter to furnish a black artist with a lifetime of creative work."² Armstrong's role here is of significance. In the midst of the Harlem Renaissance, he inspired a change in the communal (musicians and consumers) aesthetics. Artistically, he created an atmosphere that shifted the focus of jazz and blues music (in an ensemble setting) from an emphasis on the collective polyphony to one of individuality inherent in an artist's improvisational skills. Musical options that are improvised instantly in a performance setting became the basis for jazz music and consequently the artistic choices of Armstrong. Though his career spanned most of the twentieth century, it is the context of his creativity during the Harlem Renaissance that is the focus of this research.

1. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 153.

2. Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation* CXXII (June 1926): 692-94.

Armstrong's influence on the period's performing artists, as well as the music of Ethel Waters, Mamie Smith, and Bessie Smith (often with Armstrong's accompaniment), helped fuel an increase in the popularity of blues music and subsequently the themes of much of the literary and visual art. Poets such as Langston Hughes, Fenton Johnson, and Sterling Brown wrote some of the period's most important and critically acclaimed works with the production of blues music as the focal point. *Weary Blues*, *Banjo Player*, and *Ode to Ma Rainey* are three salient examples of such works. Period visual artists, Aaron Douglass's *Play de Blues* and Archibald Motley, Jr.'s, *Blues* are examples of works with blues music as its text. They creatively resisted many of the accepted academic practices and instinctively used the genre's performance settings (night clubs, rent parties) as their subjects or central themes. The artists were cognizant of the music's ability to make urban life bearable for the consumer while recalling the music's same function to those who were familiar with it in its original rural Southern setting.

The philosophical underpinnings that drove the consciousness of many of the period's social theorists were influenced (though indirectly) by Armstrong's art and blues music popularity. Indeed, simultaneous to Armstrong's salient artistic choices and the rise in the music's popularity, a debate arose as to the purpose of the period's art. Some, such as W.E.B. Du Bois believed that black American art is potentially a tool for propaganda. The sociologist and co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People advocated for the exposure, through the arts of the oppressive laws, of terrorist activities (lynching) and social injustices that were the African-American experience. Du Bois and many African-American leaders held a

heightened disappointment with the failure of the American government to recognize the bravery and patriotism shown by black American soldiers during World War I. He encouraged black artists to create works that challenged the societal norms that perpetuated the oppression, disenfranchisement, black codes, terrorism, and suffocating economic conditions that overwhelmed the African-American community indeed, the same conditions that inspired the creation of blues music.

In 1926, Du Bois detailed his views to an unsuspecting audience in a keynote address to the NAACP, titled *The Criteria of Negro Art*. Conversely, in his 1928 essay *Art or Propaganda*, Alain Locke expressed his belief that the best way to achieve multi-cultural acceptance in America would be for African-American art to acquiesce to European (Western) standards. The cultural critic and theorist believed that if an artist solely used black American concerns as their themes, it would be an admittance of a collective lack of intellect or ability to meet established Euro-centric standards. The debate's crescendo paralleled the rise in popularity of the blues music, and by 1928, record sales and sales of sheet music verified the performing art's transformation into an integral part of the nation's popular culture.

Many of the period's critics agreed with Locke's point with regards to the purpose of art. However, the influence of the increasing philanthropic support concerned both sides of the debate. Locke openly sought monetary support from well-meaning individuals who were interested in promoting black American literary and visual art. Indeed, most of the social organizations including Du Bois's NAACP, welcomed such support. However, some, particularly those in academia like Joseph W. Holley, founder

of the Albany Bible and Manual Training Institute, were primarily concerned with being accepted by a Western-based educational infrastructure that did not regard African-American art as worthy of scholarly review. Consequently, adopting the works of Hughes, Armstrong, or Douglass into the canon of American art was outside of the curriculum possibilities. David Levering Lewis explains the post-World War I efforts to fund higher education, especially the private black schools: “Harvard and Columbia having been secured, the battle for Atlanta, Fisk, Howard, and Lincoln was launched in the mid-twenties. Atlanta University was destined to be ‘saved’ by the General Education Board plan to make it a graduate institution serviced by local colleges with academic and service programs more in tune with white southern philosophy.”³ Many in academia, therefore, developed a disdain for African-American arts and considered them as unqualified for scholarly consideration, despite the creativity heard in Armstrong’s recordings and live performances. Their conservative thoughts regarding art were an outgrowth of Booker T. Washington’s theory of accommodation. Indeed, their philosophical and political beliefs were precursors to present-day black conservatism.

One of the period’s most outspoken black critics was George Schuyler. His essay, *The Negro Art- Hokum* is seminal to the black conservative construct with regards to the concept of African-American and Harlem Renaissance art. In the essay, Schuyler questioned the validity and quality of the period’s African-American arts. Schuyler explains, “As for the literature, painting, and sculptor of Aframericans---such as there is—it is identical in kind with the literature, painting and sculpture of white Americans:

3. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 159.

that is it shows more or less evidence of European influence.”⁴ He, like many of the conservative academicians was embarrassed by racial stereotypes evident in the caricatures promulgated in much of the Tin Pan Alley music and reminiscent of nineteenth century minstrelsy. Schuyler agreed with Locke’s theory that when artists create art that is strictly in the context of racial themes, they admit to an inability to create works that meet the standards of Western critics. The same critics possessed the power to affirm or deny the validity and quality of any art. The conservative cultural critic used satire to criticize the social efforts of both Harlem’s elite community (that often produced formal balls and parties that were absent of popular jazz and blues music) as well as the opposite populace with less disposable income and often gave rent parties and frequented popular nightspots. Unfortunately, Locke and Schuyler ignored the mastery inherent in composers Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle’s Broadway production *Chocolate Dandies* and Edward “Duke” Ellington’s neo-impressionistic composition, *Black and Tan Fantasy*. Both works of art were seminal to the period’s culture. The former was the first black theatrical production performed on Broadway. In *Black and Tan Fantasy*, Ellington musically expounded on the possibilities of improvising blues music that is juxtaposed with the style of Harlem stride piano. The creation subsequently became a notable example of the composer’s early compositional style.

Armstrong’s place of birth, New Orleans, was integral to the development of American jazz music and the blues, and consequently the period’s art. The enslaved Africans’ cultural behavior, particularly their music performance practices in Congo Square manifested in the development of jazz. Theorist, Olly Wilson identified the

4. George Schuyler, *The Negro Art-Hokum*, 310.

utilization of poly-rhythms, call-response, a communal approach to making music, percussive body usage, and the presence of a heterogeneous sound ideal, in the performing of Ghanaian folk music. Wilson published his findings in a 1974 article titled, *The Relationship Between African-American and West African Music*.⁵ Interestingly, the process of making music that Wilson described mirrored the music practices that were present in Congo Square. Wilson theorized that the earliest jazz musicians, who were one or two generations removed from Congo Square, used the same musical approach as their enslaved ancestors, but on European musical instruments.

Additionally, a textual analysis of eyewitness reports published by outsiders such as Benjamin Latrobe, who visited the area, reveals the presence of the West African musical practices identified by Wilson. Armstrong's collaborator on *Texas Moaner Blues* was early blues and jazz pioneer, Sidney Bechet's grandfather, who was a Congo Square musician. Bechet dedicated the second chapter of his autobiography, *Treat It Gentle* to disseminate his grandfather Omar's story. An analysis of a music transcription of the 1924 recording reveals the presence of the musical practices identified by Wilson and noted by Latrobe. Indeed, Armstrong and Bechet are less than a decade removed from New Orleans' cultural practices, particularly its blues tradition, specifically as it relates to the performing arts.

One of the salient aspects of blues music as well as the other black American folk music traditions, from which it came, is the genre's functionality. Specifically, the music often meant one thing to the musician, and another to the consumer. Historically, the

5. See Olly Wilson's "The Relationship Between African-American and West African Music" *Black Perspectives in Music* 2, no.1 (Spring 1974): 15-22.

enslaved African developed a system of using double entendre to send messages of planned escapes. Songs such as *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, *Deep River*, and *I'm Gonna Lay Down My Burdens*, had texts with double meanings. Former slave and abolitionist, Frederick Douglass surmises: "Slaves sing more to make themselves happy, than to express happiness." After describing a planned escape Douglass stated that "A keen observer might have detected in our repeated singing of 'O Canaan, sweet Canaan, I am bound for the land of Canaan,' something more than a hope of reaching heaven. We meant to reach the north---and the north was our Canaan."⁶ In both instances, the performing art had alternate functions from the perspective of the producer and the receiver. The enslaved used the music as a conduit for melancholy relief and affirmation of a planned escape respectively. The consumer often developed an affinity for the musical expressions of an oppressed group suffering from the horrors of the peculiar institution.

Similarly, African-American Post-Civil War performing art in the south functioned alternately for the producer and consumer. The system of sharecropping as well as much of America's industrial production (railroads, steel, and military) inspired intensive labor tasks. The necessity of coordinating tasks as well as creating a coping mechanism was imperative. Consequently, the invention of field hollers was inevitable. To the observer or consumer, such performing art may have been entertaining as a vocal leader (usually hired because of ability to vocalize and improvise) phrases and elicits a response from his targeted co-workers. Thus the creation of blues music was an

6. Eileen Southern, *Readings in Black American Music* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1983), 87.

outgrowth of the field hollers. It too functioned as a coping mechanism and just as the music of the enslaved; it provided a melancholy relief. The genre's role in the former is evident in much of the lyrics of early blues music. Though the period precedes the invention of sound recording, one can get a glimpse of the performing art from the itinerant solo musicians that traversed the South just before and during the Harlem Renaissance. Songs like *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean* by "Blind Lemon Jefferson" (discussed in Chapter IV) and *Sobin Heart Blues* by Bessie Smith are seminal examples of coping with an inevitable or unavoidable death and a lost romantic love respectively. Additionally, the music served as a source of liberation as the producer often identified a problem (which initiates the process of freeing oneself from said social ills) and offered a solution.

In summary, the weight of this research was to Louis Armstrong and particular literary and visual artists at the expense of not discussing the importance of other figures. For example, this researcher did not explore in any detail the impact of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Garvey attracted many African-Americans seeking relief from the oppressive conditions not only in the South but the urban North. Garvey's "back to Africa" admonitions in some instances created a binary result. It inspired thousands to collectively prepare a conduit for a mass exodus of black Americans back to Africa. Indeed, for many blacks, the U.N.I.A. was the first organization with specific plans, hierarchy, and infrastructure (beyond the black church) that embraced their African heritage. The group attracted thousands and indeed purchased a steam liner to begin the exodus. The other outgrowth of Garvey's theory was a

psychological return to Africa. For many, particularly artists, Garvey's speeches and the U.N.I.A.'s presence along with the research and publications of Carter G. Woodson on African-American and African history as well as the research of Arnold Schoenberg, inspired a new at Africa as a contributor to world history.

Additionally, one cannot underestimate the artistic contributions of Paul Robeson during the period considered here. Robeson's was an actor, orator, and vocalist. He performed weekly in theater and solo concerts. He also gained a reputation as an acclaimed stage actor. Similarly, this research did not discuss in detail the significant impact of period musicians, Sidney Bechet, Fats Waller, Edward "Duke" Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson. Each made notable contributions to the music of the Harlem Renaissance and the American music canon. Bechet was one of the first to bring the American art form to an international stage when he and Josephine Baker joined the Will Marion Cook Orchestra for a tour of Europe. One may argue that the success of James Reese Europe less than a decade earlier may have been the first to spread American folk music to an international stage.

Intense competition for piano jobs inspired the development of the "Harlem Stride" piano playing style. James P. Johnson and Willie "The Lion" Smith were the style's chief promulgators. The artists play a steady fast tempo in the left hand that plays right to left over several octaves. Simultaneously, the right hand rapidly pound out melodies and improvises. Additionally, one cannot underestimate the artistic contributions of Paul Robeson during the period considered here. Equally documented are Robeson's contributions to the Harlem Renaissance as an orator and vocalist. He also

gained a reputation as an acclaimed stage actor. Additionally, Robeson was also a significant social activist in the labor movement. Similarly, this research did not discuss in detail the impact of period musicians, Sidney Bechet, Fats Waller, Edward “Duke” Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson. Each made significant contributions to the music of the Harlem Renaissance and the American music canon. Bechet was one of the first to bring the American art form to an international stage when he and Josephine Baker joined the Will Marion Cook Orchestra for a tour of Europe. One may argue that the success of James Reese Europe less than a decade earlier may have been the first to spread American folk music to an international stage.

Intense competition for piano jobs inspired the development of the “Harlem Stride” piano playing style. James P. Johnson and Willie “The Lion” Smith were the style’s chief promulgators. The artists play a steady fast tempo in the left hand that covers several octaves. Simultaneously, the right hand rapidly pound out melodies and improvises. However, the “Harlem Stride” playing style received an artistic boost when pianist Art Tatum arrived and introduced a two-handed virtuosic approach to playing melodies. Though Tatum was relatively late on the scene, his impact is indelible, particularly when placed into the context of the subsequent be-bop era.

APPENDIX A

Louis Armstrong Discography as a Band Leader 1925 - 1930

Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five. "Gut Bucket Blues" Written by Louis Armstrong
(Recorded November 12, 1925. mx.9486.-A. Okeh 8261).

_____. "Heebie Jeebies" Written by B. Atkins (Recorded in Chicago, February 26,
1926. mx.9534-A Okeh 8300).

_____. "Cornet Chop Suey" Written by Louis Armstrong (Recorded in Chicago,
February 26, 1926) mx. 9535-A. Okeh 8320.

_____. "King of the Zulus" Written by Lil Armstrong (Recorded in Chicago, June 23,
1926) mx. 9776-A. Okeh 8396.

_____. "Skat-Dat-De-Dat" Written by Lil Hardin (Recorded in Chicago, November
16, 1926) mx. 9891-A. Okeh 8436.

_____. "Big Butter and Egg Man" Written by P. Venable and Louis Armstrong
(Recorded in Chicago, November 16, 1926) mx. 9892-A. Okeh 8423.

Louis Armstrong Stompers. "Chicago Breakdown" Written by F. Morton (Recorded in
Chicago, May 9, 1927) mx. 80851-C. Columbia 36376.

Louis Armstrong and His Hot Seven. "Potato Head Blues" Written by Louis Armstrong
(Recorded in Chicago, May 10, 1927) mx. W 80855-C. Okeh 8503.

_____. "Weary Blues" Written by Mathews (Recorded in Chicago, May 11, 1927)
mx. 80863- A. Okeh 8519.

_____. "Gully Low Blues" Written by Louis Armstrong (Recorded in Chicago, May
14, 1927) mx. W 80877-D. Okeh 8474.

Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five. "Put 'Em Down Blues" Written by E. Bennett
(Recorded in Chicago, May 14, 1927) mx. W 81302-B Okeh 8503.

_____. "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" Written by Lil Hardin and D. Raye
(Recorded in Chicago, December 9, 1927) mx. 82037-B. Okeh 8566.

_____. "Hotter Than That" Written by Lil Hardin (Recorded in Chicago, December 13, 1927) mx. 82037-B. Okeh 8566.

_____. "Savoy Blues" Written by E. Ory (Recorded in Chicago, December 13, 1927) mx. W 82056-A Okeh 8535.

_____. "Skip The Gutter" Written by S. Williams (Recorded in Chicago, June 27, 1928) mx. W 400961-A Okeh 8631.

_____. "A Sunday Date" Written by Earl Hines and S. Robin (Recorded in Chicago, June 27, 1928) mx. W 400962-B. Okeh 8609.

_____. "West End Blues" Written by Clarence Williams and Joe Oliver (Recorded in Chicago, June 28, 1928) mx. W 400967-B. Okeh 8597.

_____. "Two Deuces" Written by Lil Hardin (Recorded in Chicago, June 29, 1928) mx. W 400973-B. Okeh 8641.

_____. "Basin Street Blues" Written by S. Williams (Recorded in Chicago, December 4, 1928) mx. W 402154-A Okeh 8690.

_____. "No One Else But You" Written by Don Redman (Recorded in Chicago, December 5, 1928) mx. W 402168-B Okeh 8679.

_____. "Beau Koo Jack" Written by a. Hill, Louis Armstrong, W. Melrose, and Don Redman (Recorded in Chicago, December 5, 1928) mx. W 402169-C Okeh 8680.

Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines. "Weather Bird" Written by Joe Oliver (Recorded in Chicago, December 5, 1928) mx. W 402199-A. Okeh 41454.

Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five. "Muggles" Written by Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines (Recorded in Chicago, December 7, 1928) mx. W 402200-B. Okeh 8703.

_____. "Tight Like This" Written by Curl (Recorded in Chicago, December 12, 1928) mx. W 402226-C. Okeh 8649.

Louis Armstrong and His Orchestra "Knockin' A Jug" (Recorded in New York, March 5, 1929) mx. W 401689-B. Okeh 8703.

_____. "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" Written by J. Fields and J. McHugh (Recorded in New York, March 5, 1929) mx. W 401690-C. Okeh 8669.

_____. "Mahogany Hall Stomp" Written by S. Williams (Recorded March 5, 1929) mx. W 401691-B. Okeh 8680.

- _____. "Ain't Misbehavin" Written by A. Razaf, T. Waller, H. Brooks (Recorded in New York, July 19, 1929) mx. W 402534-B. Okeh 8714.
- _____. "Black and Blue" Written by A Razaf and T. Waller (Recorded in New York, July 22, 1929) mx. W 402535-B. Okeh 8714.
- _____. "That Rhythm Man" Written by A. Razaf, T. Waller, and H. Brooks (Recorded in New York, July 22, 1929) mx. W 402540-C. Okeh 8717.
- _____. "When You're Smiling" Written by Fisher, Goodwin, Shay (Recorded in New York, September 11, 1929) mx. 402924-B. Okeh 8729.
- _____. "St. Louis Blues" Written by W.C. Handy (Recorded in New York, December 13, 1929) mx. W 490016-B Columbia CK 46996.
- _____. "Song of the Islands" Written by C.E. King (Recorded in New York January 24, 1930) mx. W 403681-A. Okeh 41375.
- _____. "My Sweet" Written by Hoagy Carmichael and Gorrell (Recorded in New York April 5, 1930) mx. W 403896-D. Okeh 41415.
- _____. "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me" Written by Gaskill and McHugh (Recorded in New York, April 5, 1930) mx. 403897-A. Okeh 41415.
- _____. "I'm a Ding Dong Daddy" Written by P. Baxter (Recorded in Los Angeles, July 21, 1930) mx. W 404403-A. Okeh 41442.
- Louis Armstrong and His Sebastian New Cotton Club Orchestra "I'm Confessin' That I Love You" Written by A.J. Neiburg, D. Daugherty, and E. Reynolds (Recorded in Los Angeles, August 19, 1930) mx. W 404405-A. Okeh 41448.
- _____. "Memories of You" Written by Eubie Blake and A. Razaf (Recorded in Los Angeles, October 16, 1930) mx. W 404412-D. Okeh 41463.
- _____. "Sweethearts on Parade" Written by C. Newman and Guy Lombardo (Recorded in Los Angeles, December 23, 1930) mx. W 404417. Columbia 2688-D.

APPENDIX B

Louis Armstrong Discography as a Sideman 1923 - 1930

1923

King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, "Chimes Blues," by Joe Oliver, Recorded in Richmond Indiana, April 6, 1923, mx.11387-A, Gennett 5135.

_____. "Snake Rag," by Joe Oliver, Recorded June 22, 1923, in Chicago, Illinois, mx. 8391-A, Okeh 4933.

_____. "Tears," by Joe Oliver, Recorded October 25, 1923, in Chicago, Illinois, mx. 8476 B, Okeh, 40000.

1924

Ma Rainey, "See See Rider Blues," by Recorded October 16, Pm 12252.

_____. "Jelly Bean Blues," by Recorded October 16, Pm 12238.

_____. "Countin' The Blues," by Recorded October 16, Pm 12238
Virginia Liston, "Early In the Morning," by Recorded October 17, OK 8187.

_____. "You've Got The Right Key, But The Wrong Keyhole," by Recorded October 17, Ok 8173.

Clarence Williams's Blue Five, "Texas Moaner Blues," by Clarence Williams and F. Barnes, Recorded October 17, 1924, in New York, New York, mx. 72914-B, Okeh 8171.

_____. "Everybody Loves My Baby," by J. Palmer and S. Williams, Recorded November 6, 1924, mx. 72959-B, Okeh 8181.

Josephine Beatty (pseudonym for Alberta Hunter), "Everybody Loves My Baby," by Recorded November 6, Gnt. 5594.

Eva Taylor, "Everybody Loves My Baby," by Recorded November 6, Ok 8181.

_____. "Of All The Things You Done To Me," by Recorded November 6, OK 8181.

_____. "Everybody Loves My Baby," by Recorded November 6, Ok 8181.

_____. "Of All The Things You Done To Me," by Recorded November 6, OK 8181.

Josephine Beatty (pseudonym for Alberta Hunter), "Texas Moaner Blues," by Clarence Williams and F. Barnes, Recorded November 8, Gnt. 5594.

Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra, "Naughty Man," by C. Dixon, D. Redman, and S. Ward, Recorded November 14, 1924, in New York, New York, mx. 140139-3, Columbia 240-D.

Margeret Johnson accompanied by Clarence Williams's Blue Five, "Changeable Daddy of Mine," by Wooding/Schaffer, Recorded November 25, 1924, in New York, New York mx. 72997-A, Okeh 8185, CD.

_____. "Papa, Mama's All Alone," by Recorded in New York, New York, November 25, OK 8185.

Sippie Wallace, "Baby, I Can't Use You No More," by November 28, OK 8212.

_____. "Trouble Everywhere I Roam," by Recorded November 28, OK 8212.
Maggie Jones, "Poor House Blues," by recorded December 9, in New York, New York, Columbia 14050-D.

_____. "Thunderstorm Blues," by Recorded December 10, in New York, New York, Columbia 14050-D.

_____. "Anybody Here Want To Try My Cabbage," by Razaff/Waller/Dowell, Recorded December 10, 1924, in New York, New York, mx. 140174-2, Columbia 14063-D, CD .

_____. "If I Lose Let Me Lose," by Recorded December 17, in New York, New York, Columbia, 14059-D.

_____. "Screamin' The Blues," by Recorded December 17, in New York, New York, Columbia 14055-D.

_____. "Good Time Flat Blues," by S. Williams, Recorded December 17, 1924, in New York, New York, mx. 140191-2, Columbia 14055-D, CD.

Eva Taylor, "Mandy, Make Up Your Mind," by Recorded December 17 in New York, New York, Okeh 40260.

_____. "I'm A Little Blackbird Looking For A Bluebird," by Recorded December 17, in New York, New York, Okeh 40260.

Josephine Beatty (pseudonym for Alberta Hunter) with Clarence Todd, "Cake Walking Babies From Home," by recorded December 22, Gannett 5627.

_____. "Nobody Knows The Way I Feel This Mornin'," by Recorded December 22, in Gannett 5626.

_____. "Early Every Morning," by Recorded December 22 in Gannett 5626.

1925

Clara Smith, "Nobody Knows The Way I Feel This Morning," by Recorded January 7, In New York, New York, Columbia 14058-D.

_____. "Broken Busted Blues," by Recorded January 7, in New York, New York, Columbia 14062-D.

Eva Taylor, "Cake Walking Babies From Home," by Recorded January 8, in New York, New York, Okeh 40321.

_____. "Pickin' On Your Baby," by Reynolds/James, Recorded January 8, in New York, New York, Okeh 40321.

Clarence Williams's Blue Five, "Cake Walking Babies (from Home)," by Clarence Williams, C. Smith, and H. Troy, Recorded January 8, 1925, in New York, New York, mx. S 73083-A, Okeh 43021.

_____. "Pickin on Your Baby," by Reynolds/James, Recorded January 8, 1925, in New York, New York, mx. 73084-B, Okeh 40330.

Bessie Smith, "St. Louis Blues," by W.C. Handy, Recorded in New York, New York, January 14, 1925, mx. 140241-1, Columbia 14064-D, CD.

_____. "Sobbin' Hearted Blues," by Bradford/Laver/Davis, Recorded January 14, 1925 in New York, New York, mx. 140249-2, Columbia 14056-D.

_____. "Reckless Blues," by Recorded January 14, in New York, New York Columbia 14056-D.

_____. "Cold In Hand Blues," by Recorded January 14, in New York, New York, Columbia 14064-D.

_____. "You've Been a Good Ole Wagon," by Recorded January 14, in New York, New York, Columbia 14079-D.

Trixie Smith, "Mining Camp Blues," by Recorded February? in New York, New York, Pm 12256).

_____. "You've Got to Beat Me To Keep Me," by recorded February? in New York, New York, Pm 12256.

Eva Taylor, "Cast Away," by Recorded March 4, in New York, New York, Okeh 40330

_____. "Papa De-Da-Da," by S. Williams/C. Williams/C. Todd, Recorded March 4, in New York, New York, Okeh 8215.

Clarence Williams Blue Five, "Papa De Da Da," by S. Williams/c. Williams/C.Todd, Recorded March 4, 1925, in New York, New York, mx. 73205-A, Okeh 8215.

Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra, "Sugar Foot Stomp," by W. Meltrose and J. Oliver Recorded May 10, 1925, mx. 140639-2, Columbia 395-D.

Trixie Smith, "The World's Jazz Crazy And so Am I," by Recorded Mar ? in New York, New York, (Matrix 2063-1) Pm 12262.

_____. "The World's Jazz Crazy and so Am I," by Recorded Mar? in New York, New York, (Matrix 2063-2) Pm 12262.

_____. "Railroad Blues," by Recorded Mar ? in New York, New York, (Matrix 2064-1) Pm 12262.

_____. "Railroad Blues," by Recorded Mar ? in New York, New York, (Matrix 2064-2) Pm 12262.

Clara Smith, "Shipwrecked Blues," by Recorded in New York, New York, April 3, Columbia 14077-D.

_____. "Court House Blues," by Recorded in New York, New York, April 3, Columbia 14077-D.

_____. "My John Blues," by Recorded in New York, New York, April 3, Columbia 14077-D

Bessie Smith, "Nashville Woman's Blues," by Recorded May 26 in New York, New York, (Matrix 140625-2) Columbia 14090-D.

_____. "Nashville Woman's Blues," by Recorded May 26 in New York, New York, (Matrix 140625-3) Columbia 14090-D.

_____. "Careless Love Blues," by Recorded May 26, in New York, New York, Columbia (Matrix 140626-1) 14083-D.

_____. "Careless Love Blues," by Recorded May 26, in New York, New York, Columbia (Matrix 140626-2) 14083-D.

_____. "J.C. Holmes Blues," by Recorded May 27, in New York, New York, Columbia 14083-D.

_____. "I Ain't Goin to Play Second Fiddle," by Recorded May 27, in New York, New York, Columbia 14090-D.

The Southern Serenaders, "Alone At Last," by Kahn/Fiorito, Recorded August 7, 1925, in New York, New York, mx. 140820-2, Harmony 5-H, CD.

Billy Jones, "I Miss My Swiss," by Recorded August 7, in New York, New York, Har 4-HCoot Grant and Kid Wesley, "You Dirty Mistreater," by Recorded September? in New York, New York, Pm ?

_____. "Come On Coot, Do That Thing," by Recorded September ? in New York, New York, Pm 12317.

_____. "Have Your Chill, I'll Be Here When Your Fever Rises," by Recorded September ? Pm 12317.

_____. "Find Me At The Greasy Spoon," by Recorded September ?, in New York, New York, Pm 12337.

Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra, T.N.T., by E. Schoebel, Recorded October 21, 1925, In New York, New York, mx. 141170-1, Columbia 509-D.

Clarence Williams's Blue Five, "You Can't Shush Katie," by White/Creamer/Warren, Recorded, October 26, 1925, in New York, New York, mx. 73739-B, Okeh 8342.

Bertha "Chippie" Hill, "Low Land Blues," by L. Nichols, Recorded November 9, 1925, in Chicago, Illinois, mx. 9456-A, Okeh 8273.

1926

Bertha "Chippie" Hill, "Lonesome All Alone And Blue" by Recorded February 23, 1926, in Chicago Illinois, Okeh 8339.

_____. "Trouble In Mind," by Recorded February 23, 1926, in Chicago Illinois, Okeh 8312.

_____. "Georgia Man," by Recorded February 23, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8312.

Baby Mack "You've Got To Go Home On Time," by Recorded February 23, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8313.

_____. "What Kind O' Man Is That," by Recorded February 23, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 831.

Hociel Thomas, "Deep Water Blues," by Recorded February 24, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8297.

_____. "G'wan I Told You," by Recorded February 24, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8346.

_____. "Listen to Ma," (unknown writer) Recorded February 24, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, mx. 9521-A, Okeh 8436.

_____. "Lonesome Hours," by recorded February 24, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8297.

Sippie Wallace, "A Jealous Woman Like Me," by Recorded March 1, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8301.

_____. "Special Delivery Blues," by Recorded March 1, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8301.

_____. "Jack O' Diamond Blues," by Recorded March 1, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8328.

_____. "The Mail Train Blues," by Recorded March 3, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8345.

_____. "I Feel Good," by recorded March 3, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8345.

_____. "A Man For Every Day Of The Week," by Recorded March 3, 1926, Okeh 8301.

Erskine Tate's Vendome Orchestra, "Stomp Off, Let's Go," by Schoebel, Recorded May 28, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, mx. C337, Vocallion 1027.

Nolan Welsh, "The Bridwell Blues," by Welsh/Jones, Recorded June 16, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, mx. 9727-A, Okeh 8372.

_____. "St. Peter Blues," by Recorded June 16, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8372.

Butterbeans and Susie, "He Likes It Slow," by Recorded June 18, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8420.

Bertha "Chippie" Hill, "Pleadin' for the Blues," (unknown writer) Recorded November 23, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, mx. 9949-A, Okeh 8420.

_____. "Pratt City Blues," by Recorded November 23, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8420.

_____. "Mess, Katie, Mess," by Recorded November 23, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8437.

_____. "Lovesick Blues," by Recorded November 26, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8453.

_____. "Lonesome Weary Blues," Recorded November 26, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8453.

1927

Johnny Dodds' Black Bottom Stompers, "Wild Man Blues," by Morton/Armstrong, Recorded April 22, 1927, in Chicago, Illinois, mx. C 796, Brunswick 3567.

Sippie Wallace, "Dead Drunk Blues," by Recorded May 6, 1927, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8499.

_____. "Have You Ever Been Down?" by Recorded May 6, 1927, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8499.

_____. "Lazy Man Blues," by Recorded May 6, 1927, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8470.

_____. "The Flood Blues," by Recorded May 6, 1927, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8470.

1928

Lillie Delk Christian, "Too Busy," by Miller/Cohn, Recorded May 26, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois, May 26, 1928, mx. W 400955-B, Okeh 8596.

_____. "You're A Real Sweetheart," by Recorded June 26, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8607.

_____. "Too Busy," by Recorded June 26, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8596.

_____. "Was It A Dream," by Recorded June 26, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8596.

_____. "Last Night I Dreamed You Kissed Me," by Recorded June 26, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh.

Carroll Dickerson's Savoyagers, "Symphonic Raps," by B. Stevens/I. Abrams, Recorded July 5, 1928 in Chicago, Illinois, mx. W 400992-B, Argentine Odeon 193329.

Lillie Delk Christian "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," by Recorded December 11, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8650.

_____. "Baby," by Recorded December 11, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8660.

_____. "Sweethearts On Parade," by Recorded December 12, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8650.

_____. "I Must Have That Man," by Recorded December 12, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois, Okeh 8660.

_____. "I Must Have That Man," by D. Fields/J. McHugh, Recorded December 12, 1928, mx. W 402209-B, Okeh 8660.

1929

Seger Ellis, "S'posin," by Recorded June 4, 1929, in New York, New York, Okeh 41235.

_____. "To Be In Love," by R Turk/F.E. Ahlert, Recorded June 4, 1929, in New York, New York, mx. W402417-C, Okeh 41255.

Victoria Spivey, "Funny Feathers," by Recorded July 10, 1929, in New York, New York, Okeh 8713.

_____. "How Do You Do It That Way," July 10, 1929, in New York, New York, Okeh 8713.

Seger Ellis, "Ain't Misbehavin," by Fats Waller, Recorded August 26, 1928, in New York, New York, Okeh 41291.

_____. "There Was Nothing Else To Do," by Recorded August 26, 1928, in New York, Okeh 41291.

_____. "True Blue Lou," by recorded August 26, 1928, in New York, New York, Okeh 41290.

1930

Jimmie Rodgers, "Blue Yodel No. 9," by Jimmie Rodgers, Recorded July 16, 1930, in Los Angeles, California, mx. W 403896-D, Okeh 41415.

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